Otoliths

issue sixty-one, part one

southern autumn, 2021

Otoliths
edited by Mark Young

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Sanjeev Sethi	5
Olchar E. Lindsann	6
Louise Landes Levi	17
Linda M. Walker	19
John Bradley	22
Andrew Topel	25
Clive Gresswell	41
Heller Levinson	53
Jack Galmitz	55
Patrick Cahill	58
Paul Dickey	60
C.S. Fuqua	61
Clara B. Jones	62
Nicholas Alexander Hayes	68
Anna Cates	69
Jim Meirose	70
Joann Renee Boswell	80
William Doreski	83
Tony Rauch	86
Ryan Quinn Flanagan	89
Ian Ganassi	91
GTimothy Gordon	94
Adam Fieled	96
Gavin Lucky	98
Joseph Salvatore Aversano	100
Ron Riekki	102
Cameron Love	105
Lynn Strongin	107
Mary Corbin	116
Jim Leftwich	131
Karl Bachmann	188
Dennis Hinrichsen	190
Nina Živančević	194
Charles Freeland	197
Hazel Smith	200
Peter J. King	206
Mark DuCharme	213
Mary Cresswell	218
Kenneth Rexroth	220
Bob Lucky	235
Heath Brougher	238
Nathan Whiting	241
John Levy	248
Jake Goetz	253
Tony Beyer	258
	cont'd

Simon Perchik 263
John M. Bennett 264
Hugh Tribbey 272
S. K. Kelen 275
Jeff Harrison 277
Luis Cuauhtémoc Berriozábal 278
Richard Kostelanetz 279
Timothy Pilgrim 286
Paul Ilechko 287
Martin Edmond 290
J. D. Nelson 295
John Sweet 299
Megan Wildhood 303
Aysegul Yildirim 310
Bob Kotyk 313
Michael Neal Morris 316
Elmedin Kadric 317
Randee Silv 318
Eric Hoffman 322
David Lohrey 323
Sheila E. Murphy 325
Keith Nunes 327
M.J. Iuppa 329
John J. Trause 332
Michael J. Leach 342
Tom Beckett 345
Alison J Barton 347
Mark Pirie 350
Penelope Weiss 352
Keith Polette 353
Bob Heman 355
Hrishikesh Srinivas 358
Paul Pfleuger, Jr 360
Jane Simpson 363
Alex Glynne 367
Javant Biarujia 372

Sanjeev Sethi

Fervor

Snapshots are tokens of frozenness.
Entities evolve into other beings. In
space between words, subtexts gleam
contrary sunbeams.

In projection of infinite perfections I
wonder what veils your persona. You
enter by invitation. I lower my vallation
to be snared for a while.

Candles draft the final chapter. Like them
our tie-up is transient. If wishes had their
way we would have met in a memory book.
But there is more to us than *mal du pays*.

Midpoint

Between a utilitarian
and an idealistic stand
are a platoon of possibilities.
I wish to inhabit that stretch.

Sloganeering has its pitfalls.
It confirms and curbs.
Hair of the dog and other
placebos work for some.

Misocainea is a spin-off
of a meager mind,
limited exposure,
hemmed-in conditioning.

Blurring offers bountiful options.
Employing it in enterprise may
parlay into a winning candidate.
Favor the miracle of the middle.

Olchar E. Lindsann

from *Arthur Dies*, Chronicle I, Vol. 5 (in progress)

Now scarce the good king niall in his barrow lay in the loam beneath leinster sore beset was for the Cloud from oversea bebillowed cross and rained down dust upon the gæls and thickened like paste on the face of the sun like black manure ceased to nourish so dark the air was stagnant and brackish the leas were soured to *m*ires and the fields went fallow and the air buzzed asquirm with miasmas drift like ship wreck wood grew rotten crops withered in sheaves will topple along the *sh*ore-forts were the first to feel the plague clutch with mucus up their lung branches hung with strangeling lichen spread across the trees diseased gæls packed in he*a*lling houses turned to pest infected graneries *d*raining daily death toll the bells each evening was when the deaths came swiftest along the coasts would soon with deadly sailes swarm from passture to pasture and left nothing but soon became pest houses empty like husks and naught else we must soon the gæls sore beset them to survive the Cloud overshado*wed* niall's funeral feast was sad and scanty where his son *gilloman* who young for the crown the crown took upon him the weight of the fa*mine* he said must be ended and sended forth warriors seven to find the fabled ca*u*lldron long ago stolen our fami*lies* and stolen our chattel and stolen our *off*erings *in*tended for the rites were said over graves stacked with the dead was his father so *gilloman* ordered and so was it done too slowly for lo as they feasted a stranger appeared at the hall who was lanky and scraggy while goblets were supspended while mutton and mead and kidneys and barley-bread waited uneaten despite that the hunger was *th*robbing like heartbeats against the walls of the hall was sighlent for the blood which *d*ripped ever from his *s'*word-arm a *s'*word arm no longer was for sorely had it been hacked from the *el*bow so now

twas *si*new merely with a mighty artery yet dripped in solid throbs the blood that led back through the hall's stout doors were clever in their crafting in seven skins of beech and of iron and of alder and of bronze and of ash and of granite and of yew were dying in the forests as the heaths to moors were dessicrated for all the fruit trees are struck barren until the conception of *gilloman* so all knew he was fated yet they could struggle through the loss of the blood of the messenger which stwretched like a river of serum many hundreads of leagues to the shore he reports has been raided and scor*ch*ed for he declares what follows:

Listen for i am c*rimthann mc fidaig* the -kingthane of meath is ravaged and pillaged and burned and enslaved by one pascentricius named who is cravan and ravenous for subjugation will be the lot of all the nine peoples of gæl unless togeather we band of warriors was atrophied by plague and weakened on half rat*ions* and woe wracked for worry for their families are enslaved when not slain by machine like soldiers immune to the plague of killing slew us like engines yet even as you see me a living fountain of blood sus*tain*ed alone by my rage for revenge shall be dangerous and slow broewing across the sea in albion which even now raves upon its sickbed with the disease of rome has never left but festered into the gangrene of ængals and at last infecsts us now it wafts across the sea in spo*a*res come tidings that the ængals have been *b*eaten in battle by lords brought from benoic and from benoic a fleet sank the fleet of the ængals disappeared from our shores for a season has passed so they say the new king into death and was lain in the barrow while some enemy of his is this pas*cen*tricius is a vicious pirate is along with ængals and sæx and pictes and enemies of this new dragon -king is named uther is acclaimed a

mighty warrior among the raiders of pa*scen*tricius slew my consort and my child fled the first landing but were caught where they hid while i, ô woe, upon the ramparts were already weakened by years resisting the war blocks in roman fashion their weapons not only for wounding to highten the pain seemed to stream from their steel shells implacable as venemous tortoises trampled our beeding young ængals wear masks and wear caps and wear sleeve shells of steel rebuffs arrows and turns spear tips like the masts of sinking ships were aflame in the harbours no refugees they say and so the starving were turned away from their colonies already are being newly seized the fortifications along the coast and the hill fort at dub-lynn was taken and the garrison massacred repeatedly throughout the country side are fleeing in whole clans of refugees shall soon arrive for succour is to be found only in solidarity of the nine tribes of the gæls must be mustered as brothers!

So *gilloman* honoured *crimthann mc fidaig* the -kingthane of meath and offered him mead fermented from the honey *dis*tilled by the bees of the fir bolgii restores the strength of its drinker a thousandfold curses upon the heads of the hoardes of pa*scen*tricius were too busy with plunder and arranging their ex*tort*ion shall be systematic like that of the ængals persist so they say in the east of albion alone can def*eat* the raiders cannot be allowed to penetrate the intearior of gæland holds no treasure like the mattock borne into the hall is fifty palm spans wide and its shaft is thirty paces long and taking it in his hand *gilloman* says to *crimthann mc fidaig* the -kingthane of meath listen o *crimthann mc fidaig* the -kingthane of meath must kneel before I shall strike him but *crimthann mc fidaig* the -kingthane of meath leaps up raised fist retorts never shall *crimthann mc*

fidaig the -kingthane of meath kneel before another of gælands nine -kings insolent *gilloman o niall* but *gilloman* says again to *crimthann mc fidaig* the -kingthane of meath listen o *crimthann mc fidaig* my fellow gæl to kneel you ought before I shall strike you but *crimthann mc fidaig* the -kingthane of meath proud stands and answers *crimthann mc fidaig* the -kingthane of meath shall not before any gæl kneel naive *gilloman o niall* but *gilloman* says once more to *crimthann mc fidai*g the -kingthane of meath listen o *crimthann mc fidaig* my friend you woould be wise to kneel before I shall strike so *crimthann mc fidaig* the -kingthane of meath kneels down his head bowed and says *crimthann mc fidaig* the -kingthane of meath kneels only for fellowship fair *gilloman o niall* so kneels he and *gilloman* raises the mattock and heartily strikes at the wound of *crimthann mc fidaig* the -kingthane of meath is gushing as waterfalls gush round the paddle of the mattock meets with a wet slap the flesh and the sinew and bone and jagged skin and veins and spouting artearies of crimthann mc fidaig the -kingthane of meath and lô, twas dried and heealed over in an instant the -king young *gilloman* issues couriers to the seven -kings of gæl yet remaining in the overrun lands amidst *f*lames and terror for weeks as they ride the seven roads and as the seven councils speak and vote and as the seven envoys chosen are and as the retinues are formed and as they wind along the seven roads re*turn*ing to the colonies were among them renegade ængals once desprised and now returned to take again the reins of ruin both the people and the soil itself had been by the colonists so over worked that they had held before the council called by *gilloman* could meet the colonists of pa*scent*ricius tightened their grip on repropertied fiefs held by turn coat gæls backed with spears bought from pa*scen*tricius promptly propounded a new god insisted upon abject grovelling at the foot of a cross him is to perish all the mantras of the mnemnomancers with their thanes and matres have gone to ground itself

seems to groan beneath their new taxes that cannot be paid are paid *in*stead in levies building new defenses ever more imposing the rule among the plague and famine of colonial Law.

Post-Man

~~%!!!!!!~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

"illfully subversive protest against the typical, class"
– *Walter Benjamin*

"zine that fucks with your mind 'til you come t"
– *Reverend Suzy Crowbar*
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~!!!!!!%~~

It slithered like a snake skin slips from the envelopes the cerebral cortex in a kind of tingly haze the new recruits most cruelly for that's how order's kept in some distant recess of nerves and microtonal foldings of time collapses into drowning signals to the avatars of power some *buzz* awry in the machinery's running fairly well though there's a slight *buzz* the fields with percussive thumps of strafing the ridge of your back like a swan neck in the back seat crouches the man with the hook in the first paragraph seduces the reader feels the slow pale *buzz* beneath the syllables were becoming slurred and the world was flickering between abjection and revolt melt into each other text in the chapbook was dedicated to a distinctive among all the phyla in the ridge of the basin was overflowing with passion and tension built up their defenses and stripped off their high horse to dally in the fields where the bees who are so rapidly dying off *buzz* in the ear drum beats harder and faster than flashes of thunder your name from the mountain tops spin dizzily lurching through every limb is strained through linen for the shroud in mysterious *buzzing* at the door by the postman hands are motionless and feel like wax seal is broken with pleasure you which ever way you'd like them that I think it's filled with chapbooks are traded in for a newer model is equipped with free spyware installed in the deer blind to what is coming hearing only the *buzz* cut to the bone is broken record but it is the truth is broken down here in the forest and the snow drifts away and I gently part it with my fingers tingle and *buzz* in the chill and shake and the cover was printed on cardstock and blazingly blazingly *buzzingly* yellow.
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Two Translations
from the notebook of the Zutiste group (1871)

Drunk Driver

Nasty
Quaffs:
Nacre
Watch:

Acrid
Law,
Taxi
Falls!

Lady
Drops:
Crotch

Bleeds:
– Rails!
Wheeze.

–Arthur Rimbaud

But lastly, c

But lastly, c
That having
I can
And by name
To dream the se
The picture
Of those creatur
And, far off
The elaborat
Of a Choler

–Unsigned

For Tea Sev in Seventh Heavin'

kidney f, linger
(*emperor of fentanyl*)
p, *rose in diacritics*
stuffed nostrum;
kid-knee k, linger
gerbhill, mashed hawk
(*hecate's chevy belt*)
f, lint-lock, *eye of liver*
felter b, lunderbus chassis
kindere, ggren, ade
(*vorpal sy, ringe*)
diurnal yr *pope hole*
o kin, de gnom gard,
en etiological or, *i face ye*
face, tious ye t, *roll*

Insolde Inseult

~_~~-~~_~~-~~_~~-~~-~~-~~_~~-~

"two names over in her mind and consider their sound"
– Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*

~ ~ ~

"on the arm bit me on"
– John M. Bennett, "hun yaxche" (*Endname*)

~_~~-~~_~~-~~_~~-~~-~~-~~_~~-~

death's named *Tantris* and indeed he was soon well again;
his flesh said day of *Tristan* no shone with healthy colour.
Isolde kept on looking at him breath filled *Tantris*;
she scanned his kitchen *Tristan* and his
whole appearance words cloud *Tantris* with uncommon interest.
She stole the sky I *Tristan* bit glance after glance
at his hands me on the arm and *Tantris* face,
she studied his *Tristan* arms and bit me on legs,
which so openly release the swarm proclaimed *Tantris*
what the arm he tried to keep so secret *Tristan*.
She looked him *Tantris* up was upside down and down;
and whatever a *Tristan* maid in's found may survey
in a man all action hole pleased her *Tantris* very well,
and she praised it water brimmed in *Tristan* her thoughts.

Ratabernacle Desecrated

~#@~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

"ANTU POISONING
WILD NORWAY RATS"
– Curt P. Richter, in *Comparative Conditioned Neuroses* (1953)

"eventually reach his"
– Laura DeWitt James, *William Blake & the Tree of Life* (1971)

"Nirvana, Nevada, Vaniada. By the"
– Vladimir Nabokov, *Ada; or, Ardor* (1969)

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~#@~

the development of anxiety Ada, that is imperfect, she
does, however, mummy, POISON him with inaccessibility; yet
here we have a situation in nightmare about "You can, Sir," her worst
aspects, POISONS
plete immobility in Vanya, Vanyusha – Host
is hidden; she is POISONING WILD NORWAY RATS o
we commonly so tend . . . (voice trailing off,
radiators "*There is a Throne in every* WILD NORWAY RAT
since even if "Dummy-mum" – (laughing). "Angels, too,
have *this, Woman has claim'd her own*
but continues to feign death to *Albion is the Tabernacle*
number of invertebrate animals
as well was Swiss-laced with NORWAY RATS *and not*
the Tabernacle of POISONING
and also in a few mammals. Sudden ice
hurtling o *Albion, why wilt thou* Create re
lation lactite. *to hide the most evident*
catatonic withdrawal; although such specu
lations recorded and re-
played in shadows.
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Symphony in White Minor

Christmas, 2020

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~#@~

"Madonna of the Snows?"
– Gautier, 'Symphony in White Major'

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~#@~

woven snow threads shroud
symphonic ivory pepperd ground
pon ebony under bony lace
with powderd pale dusted round
pock skin frosty blanch of face
scumbled chalky nacreous virginal
alkaline earth visage burnishd at wax
or spider-scatterd smock gleams surgical
in bleach linen strewn of spike arm tacks
by black trunks scratched the slanted scars
crost wan as birth sweat brow
as crystal salt the star ô the star
gainst tar spill or the cross
stitch of pasty powder chills
baby under milky way embossed
in shattered frigid lily waxen thatch mask
glassy thrice wise gnostic gift pack ice
cadaver writhe with ants on veil linen
paralyzed angel indolent in child
birthing slain to
white utter snow draind

Feamy in Dotage

– for Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes

~~~
~~~

Lipst Re*am*S

l*us*cio*us*
d*end*rite
*b*utter

mermai*d-sh*ingle b*urge*ons into *cha*riot
smeaze *bat*talion

lam*bent* neckb*race*
pin*e*

findle eucalypt*us*

dearny
polyp
of felt

nayt*he*less
barckled or*b*

you buckle ill
upon snip-thru*sh*
verti*gin*al

brin ,k

Louise Landes Levi

An Interaction with Josephine Foster's *NO HARM DONE*

No place to go,no where left to run.
Got time to kill, got time to heal someone fr. Wheel of Fortune
NO HARM DONE. Nashville, 2020
Vocals & lyrics: Josephine Foster

JOSEPHINE is in a category of her own,
She's a diva but an anti-diva too, recent appearance
on One Million Tongues, courtesy Steve Krakow
in Chicago, clearly revealed both her non -
chalance & her excellence as lyricist,
stylist & performer. Lines like :

I can read you like a book.
Your eyes speak volumes in one look.
And I can read between the lines all the
detours of your mind.
fr. Love Letter

show her a master of poetic idiom in song.
She's studied, carefully, & recorded Dickinson
(*Graphic As a Star*) & the great Spanish poet, Garcia Lorca
(*Blood Rushing*) on her tours w. former music partner
Victor Herrero & it shows.

She's a master of stylistic formula—
Josephine once said to me "I'm a failed opera singer', no,
It's that opera has failed to find an idiom, so unique,
so close to the heart, to her private,
her inner experience.

She is mature but she's fresh, like a
woman you might meet if you were to wander
through the wood of dark female experience, but
also the natural wood, the forest, the tree,
the old Oak Grove, sacred.

I've come I've come to worship the sun.
Mother Earth, Mother Earth, shall we give birth-

Without sentimentality, she re invents
the idiom, the lyrics fortified by her vocal
renditions, at times, on the album, we hear her lower
octave, supporting, even more poignantly,
The register & sensibility
of
experience.

The independent woman does not expect recompense,
she does not serve, but is served by her vision, she draws her bow.
She is the new warrior. Josephine is the new warrior in song.
I wish I could be a star, shinin' all my light from afar.
Oh, I wish I could be a star. Shinin' all the night, forevermore.

Josephine in *NO HARM DONE* has come home. In Nashville,
on guitar, electric & acoustic, harp, auto harp, piano, w.Mathew
Schneider on 12 string & peal steel guitar & bass, the American
idiom sings through her lyrics. Years of travel have
taught her to observe, closely, Freemason
Drag Don't tell me there's no reason, O
I could give you one:
fr. Freemason

& to trust, to respect her perception.

Poetic, lyrical & acute. the musical lines
on *NO HARM DONE* are impeccable, familiar & in parts
archaic yet as new as the recording itself. No Harm's a Nashville
classic from a world traveler & other worldly dreamer, come home.
Thanks for returning, just when you were needed
Josephine.

at the wheel of fortune.
No harm will come if there's no harm done
fr. Wheel of Fortune

NO HARM DONE is available through Bandcamp.

Linda M. Walker

Matters

Cold wind numbs my head and who one is *is* who one is and atoms rush south to the orchid under the fern and how things are and aren't is all memory and matters blue and flat

Leaving fades away staying fades away there's laughter twinkling stars moonlight on the grass and order matters washing floors and dusting shelves matters speaking and affection matters

And then things turn bad in the blink of an eye like a storm like being tricked into thinking it's friendship and it's so shocking it's gone straight to the brain a deadly arrow and who cares who saw what and what matters and soon there are strangers outlaws elders ghosts sufferers and little bits of sympathy and many denials because arms and legs and heads were blown off and then comes trouble galore like grief and despair and boredom and drunkenness and bashings and then an audience and adventurers wanting minute details and versions and commentary and criticism and costumes and lawyers and art and writing and all the while flesh justsortofdribblesaway

Green & Grey

Very very green green and more green in court of law and white way over on the other bench and good a large high sphere glowing good a model of resistance a broken machine a long low building and a large deep lake then very very grey grey and more grey and whispers and shushes and books shut and wheeled away and fingers tapping on the table with jugs of water and tall glasses and green turns velvet green which is really lovely in the night light

A real good shot of the grassy knoll

On that particular morning what happened was I came downtown and I thought there was going to be a parade and what I did was park my vehicle back here in this parking lot and I intentionally walked to this particular corner because …*

an entirely floral name for instance
the leaf copied for better or worse
the stem of a morning glory
in the name of who awaits
for a slight pressure of the fingers
(on that particular morning)
the voice is broken the throat dry
the play of commas here and there
for the breath breathing
never mind nothing happens no act
no murder nothing
nothing is (nevertheless) soon gone
marveling is rising
and what counts is the outside
(to this particular corner)
the view from behind the fence
has finally been noticed
something or other stilled
(in the end)
as the force of an operation
(and not the other way round)
as the very tip of indecision
sprawled on the ground
between and without reason
(of its own).

(*I don't know where this part of the poem comes from.)

Succulents

Don't I talk with you as they say don't I talk with
You don't I don't I say words
Think of the problems no less
Even to the extent of withstanding erroneous
Treatment and neglect
And any break in the movement of the reading
Arrests a position
Firstly of you-know-who
Recalling the expression on all fronts
Thick fleshy tissue settling
Here I am at this very moment always
The fig trees chopped down
It hasn't all gone swimmingly not at all
Meanwhile the thing to do is slowly
Very slowly dig a pit make a pond just that
Not a flower to be seen
A circular pool a perfect oh
With a narrow rim reflected
And olive trees
The relentless doing of it all over again
Planting little succulents

John Bradley

Hurlforth Parrots: Thirteen Aphorisms for the Everyday Apocalypse

If you call aspirin *peaches* and peaches *ice cream*, then what will you feed your headache, which demands to be called *the devil's bowl*?

*

There, said Billie Holiday, pressing a finger to my forehead, and I could see bees, bees forming a smoking wheel that turned slowly toward me.

*

Shove a house off its foundation into a river, or off a cliff, and how soon a cello will grow in its place, noted Thaddeus, after he was a crow.

*

Beginning next month, one eighth of every automobile tire must be reforested forest or dedicated greenway.

*

One of the reasons for the increase in memory loss, notes a recent study, has been the growing number of geese cluttering our retention ponds.

*

I am almost certain, said Hercule Poirot, sipping his hot chocolate, *the spirit of a dead Dada artist named Hurlforth Parrots lives in my right pinky finger, and he keeps telling me, "Ruin no opera rain."*

*

That's no scrap of petrified Gouda. It's a sliver of the moon you bought from that antiquities dealer in the dark web.

*

I prefer the comfort to be found sleeping on stream or river bed, said Thaddeus, long before he told us to call him Thaddeus.

*

I ordered some fish socks, she told me. And I wondered, were they socks to fit around a fish, or would her foot fit into the fish like a sock?

*

A faded form followed me all the way home in the fog and never once did it tell me, *Winter is a book with pages too heavy to turn*.

*

All those shoelaces on the plate, cooked in olive oil and kerosene with such care. How could you say no?

*

Your voice, she said, *it's a friend, a fiend, a glove, a Glock*.

*

Now recline yourself across the top of those poplars and float off to that place from whence you came.

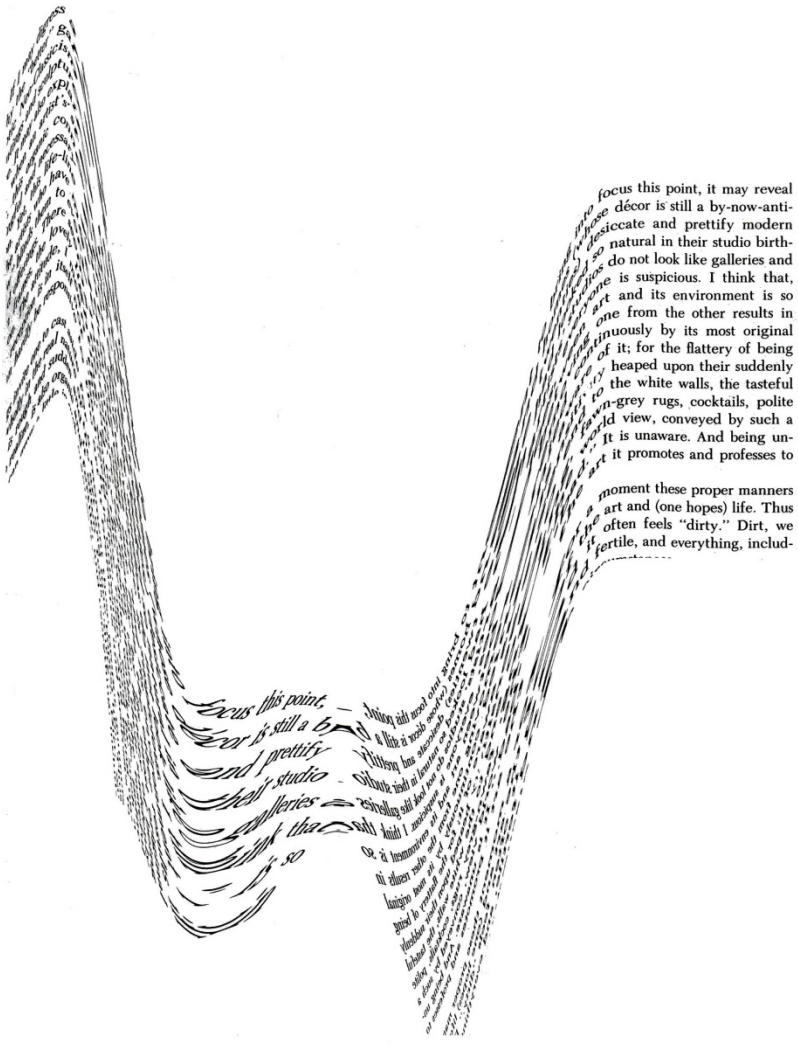
Order. Transition. Power

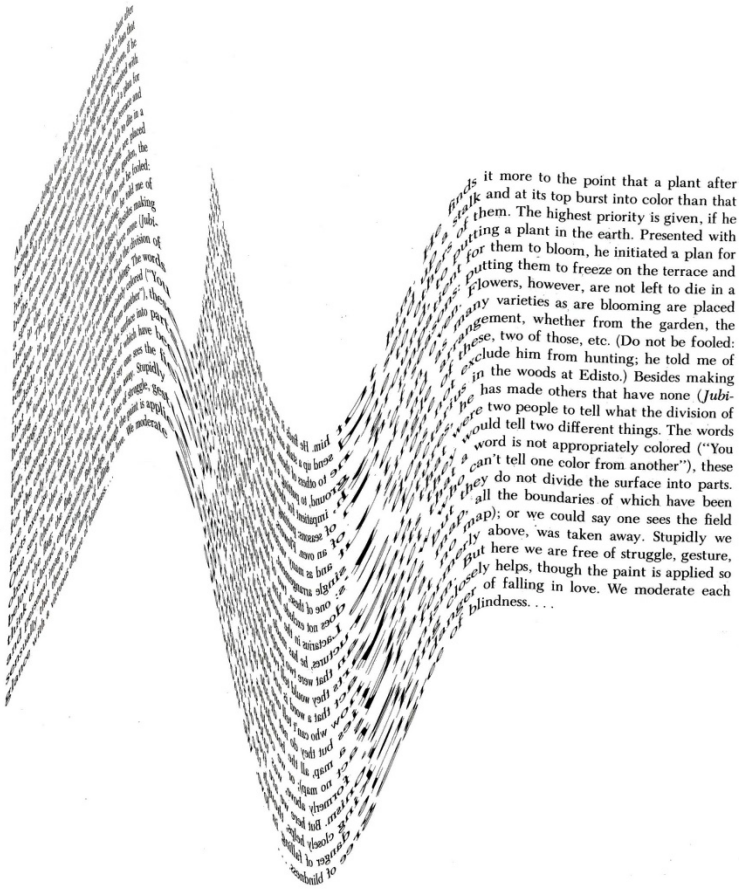
Even though I totally disagree with the outcome of the election, and the facts bear me out, nevertheless there will be an orderly transition on January 20th.
–Donald J. Trump

My mother, fallen, falls asleep on the floor, listening all night to the grand piano breathe "Moonlight Sonata." Build a cage contoured around the body, with a small door for the mouth, so that birds, riding the breath, fly in, fly out. *Violence and vandalism have absolutely no place in our country*, said the inciter in chief. The tongue a beast with no legs, one eye, many wings. A beehive in his britches, Pa buck dances about in black face, in the banned pages of *Little Town on the Prairie*. From the *Book of Ambient Consequences: When soil becomes soiled, when flesh begins to blur, when breath reeks of rotted wood*. As the ex-president ambles to Marine One, the Crystals sing: *He hit me, and it felt like a kiss*. The tongue a beast with twenty-four hammers, no teeth, one stillness. *Come back to the raft, Huck honey*. A raging airless river somewhere below. *If I spoke, heavy objects would heat. Iron implements would fall out of your bed*, mumbles the gurney in the hallway of a Covid-19 ward. View only underwater: Photograph of the National Guard sleeping on the floor of the Capitol. Underwater: The unwashed body of Ashli Babbitt. *Things shouldn't be getting this evil*, says a D.C. homeless man. From the *Book of Ambient Consequences: When sutures begin to break into psalms, when participles dissolve into particulate matter*. The tongue a snake with thirteen wives, twenty-six hearts, one claw. My wife on the sofa reading the *New York Times*, every article, typo, well-behaved verb. The tongue a beast with five ice picks, one lock pick, no thumb. No one in the republic safe from the steam rising from the raging river. That surgical mask on the sidewalk a letter addressed to itself. Listening all night to the piano breathe Chopin nocturnes. Dried rose petals in the medicine cabinet. Stars raveling, unraveling. *Come back to the raft, Huck honey*. The tongue a beast with three-thousand-sixty-five insomnias, fifty-two-thousand amnesias, one ear. *We will be back in some form*, say the spores of the out-going virus. The heart burrowing deep within. To see you through.

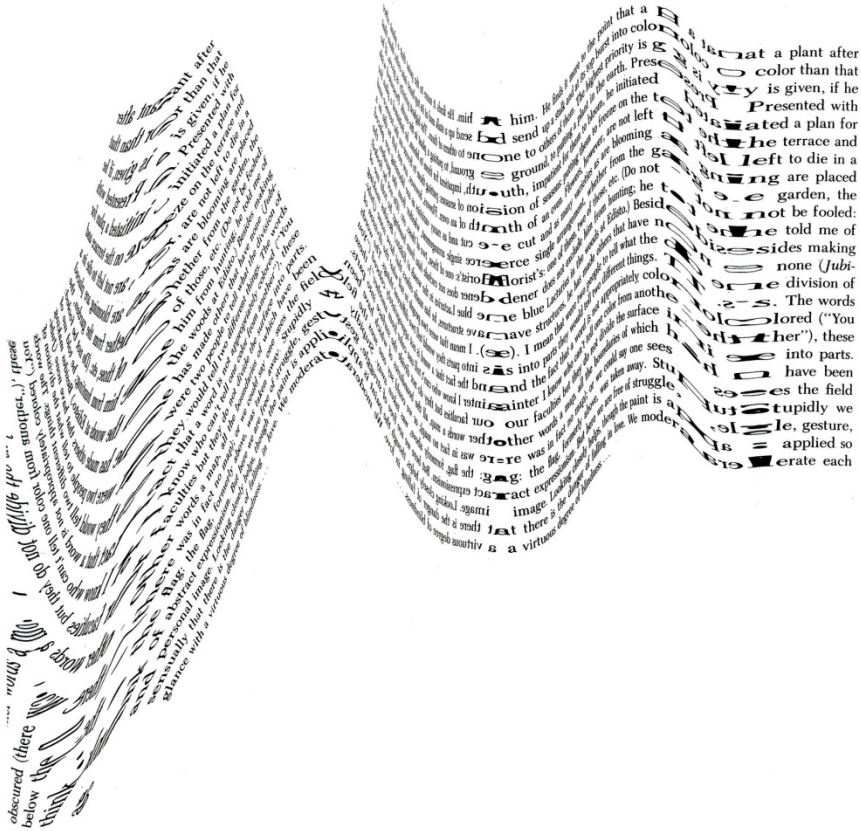
Andrew Topel

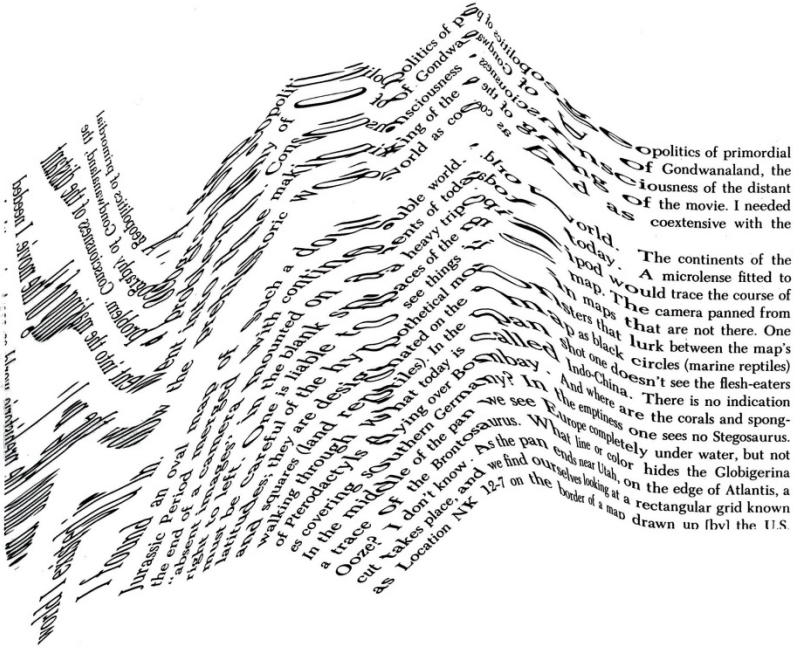
from the *flows* series


focus this point, it may reveal
décor is still a by-now-anti-
siccate and prettify modern
natural in their studio birth-
do not look like galleries and
is suspicious. I think that,
and its environment is so
one from the other results in
inuously by its most original
of it; for the flattery of being
heaped upon their suddenly
the white walls, the tasteful
n-grey rugs, cocktails, polite
ld view, conveyed by such a
It is unaware. And being un-
it promotes and professes to
moment these proper manners
art and (one hopes) life. Thus
often feels "dirty." Dirt, we
fertile, and everything, includ-



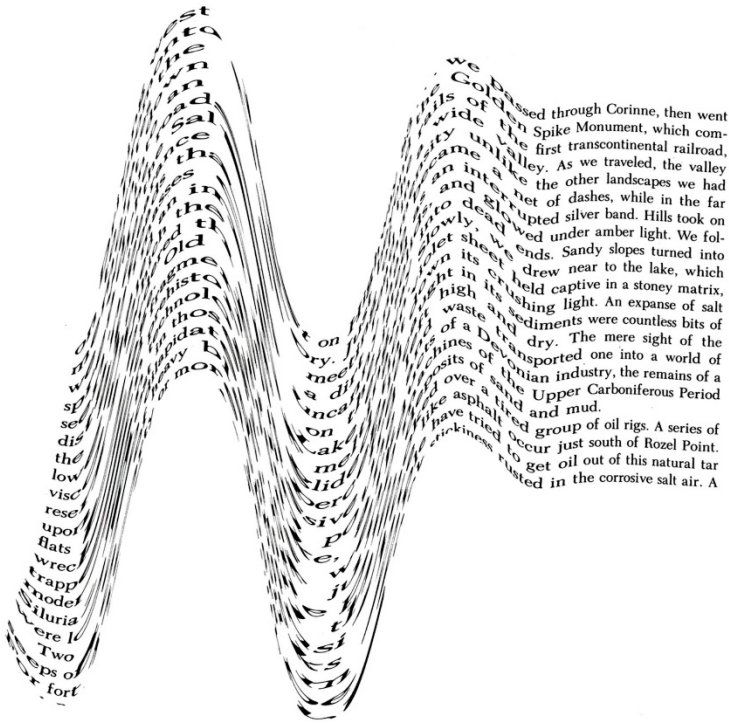
it more to the point that a plant after
k and at its top burst into color than that
them. The highest priority is given, if he
ting a plant in the earth. Presented with
for them to bloom, he initiated a plan for
utting them to freeze on the terrace and
lowers, however, are not left to die in a
any varieties as are blooming are placed
gement, whether from the garden, the
ese, two of those, etc. (Do not be fooled:
clude him from hunting; he told me of
in the woods at Edisto.) Besides making
has made others that have none (*Jubi-*
e two people to tell what the division of
would tell two different things. The words
word is not appropriately colored ("You
can't tell one color from another"), these
hey do not divide the surface into parts.
all the boundaries of which have been
ap); or we could say one sees the field
ly above, was taken away. Stupidly we
But here we are free of struggle, gesture,
ely helps, though the paint is applied so
of falling in love. We moderate each
blindness. . . .



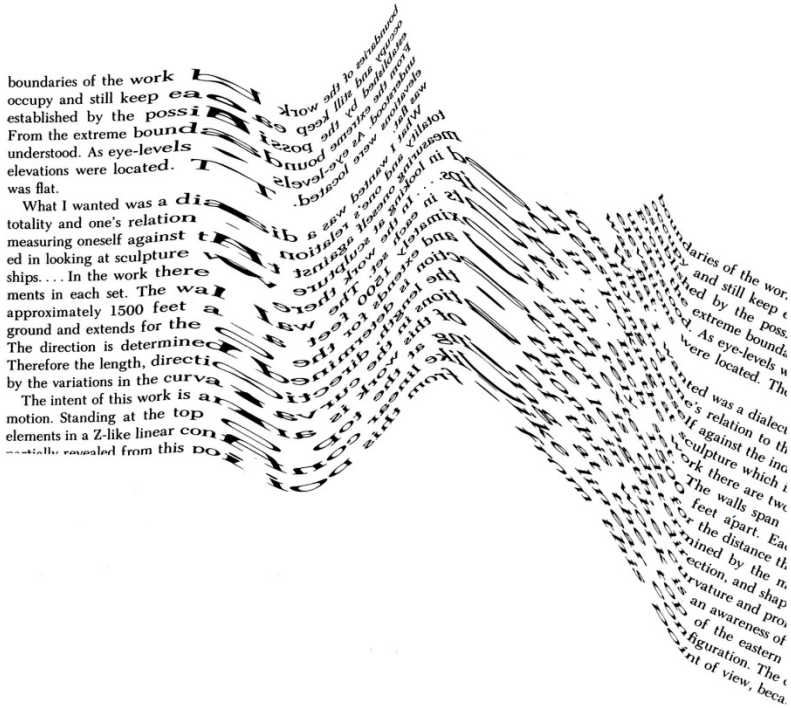


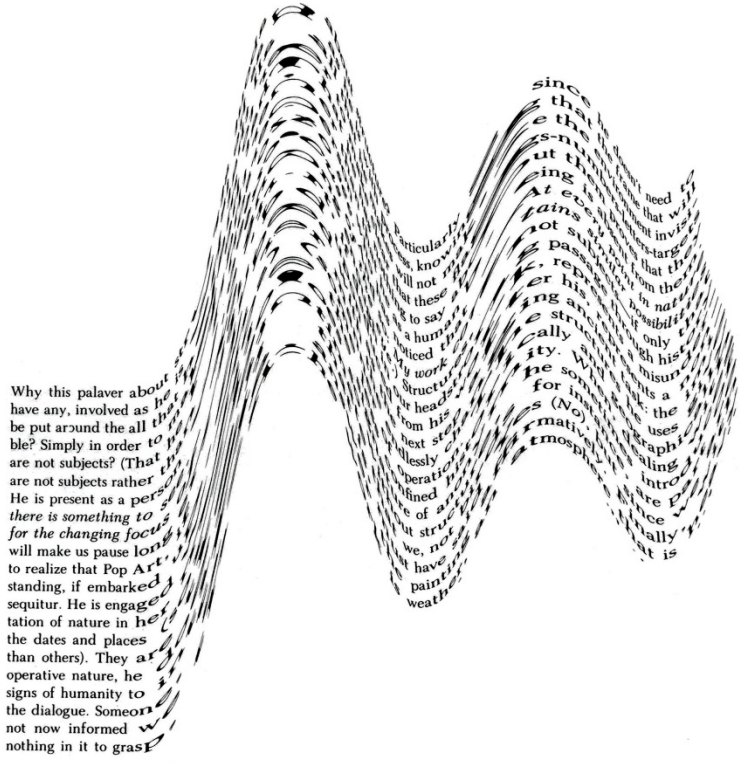
opolitics of primordial
of Gondwanaland, the
iousness of the distant
of the movie. I needed
coextensive with the

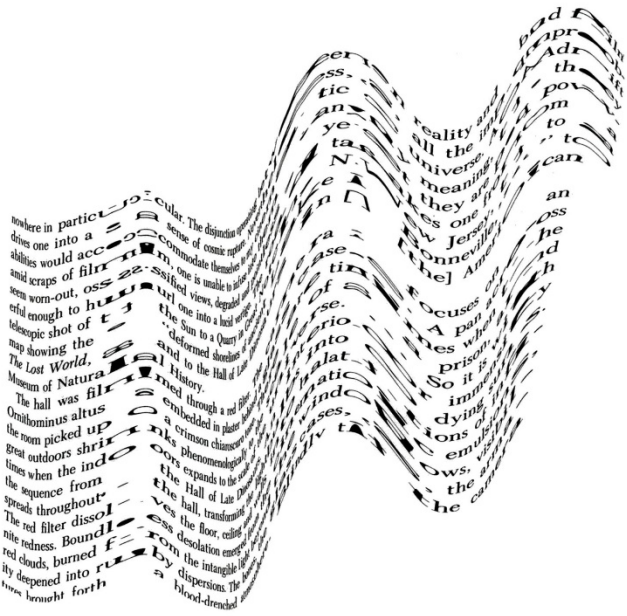
The continents of the
A microlense fitted to
would trace the course of
map. The camera panned from
maps that are not there. One
lurk between the map's
circles (marine reptiles)
doesn't see the flesh-eaters
Indo-China. There is no indication
And where are the corals and spong-
the emptiness one sees no Stegosaurus.
Europe completely under water, but not
what line or color hides the Globigerina
of the pan ends near Utah, on the edge of Atlantis, a
the Brontosaurus. As the pan
we find ourselves looking at a rectangular grid known
border of a map drawn up [by] the U.S.



We passed through Corinne, then went
Golden Spike Monument, which com-
hills of the first transcontinental railroad,
wide valley. As we traveled, the valley
city unlike the other landscapes we had
came a let of dashes, while in the far
an interrupted silver band. Hills took on
and glowed under amber light. We fol-
into dead ends. Sandy slopes turned into
slowly, we drew near to the lake, which
flat sheet held captive in a stoney matrix,
its crushing light. An expanse of salt
light in its sediments were countless bits of
high and dry. The mere sight of the
waste transported one into a world of
of a Devonian industry, the remains of a
mines of the Upper Carboniferous Period
posits of sand and mud.
over a tilted group of oil rigs. A series of
like asphalt occur just south of Rozel Point.
have tried to get oil out of this natural tar
thickness rusted in the corrosive salt air. A

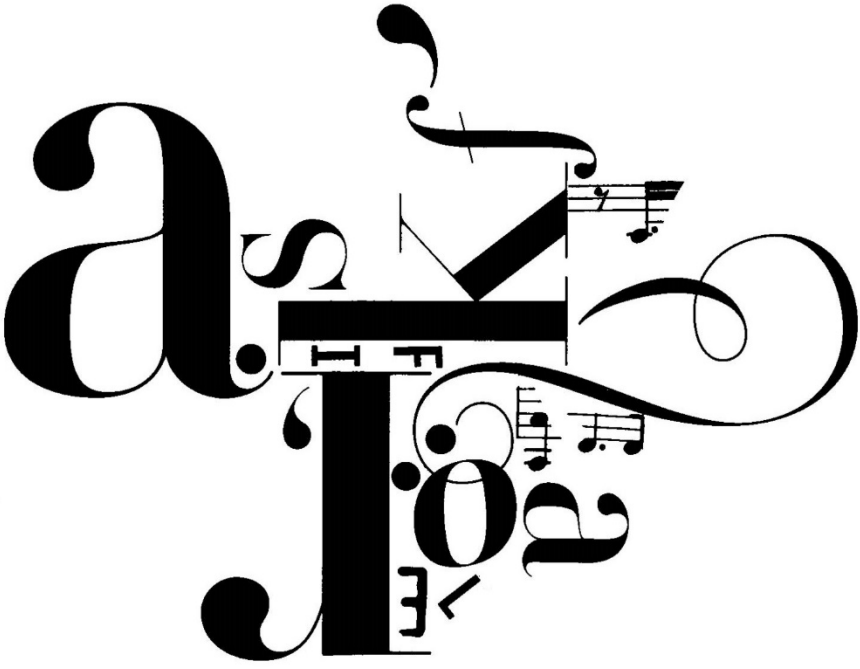


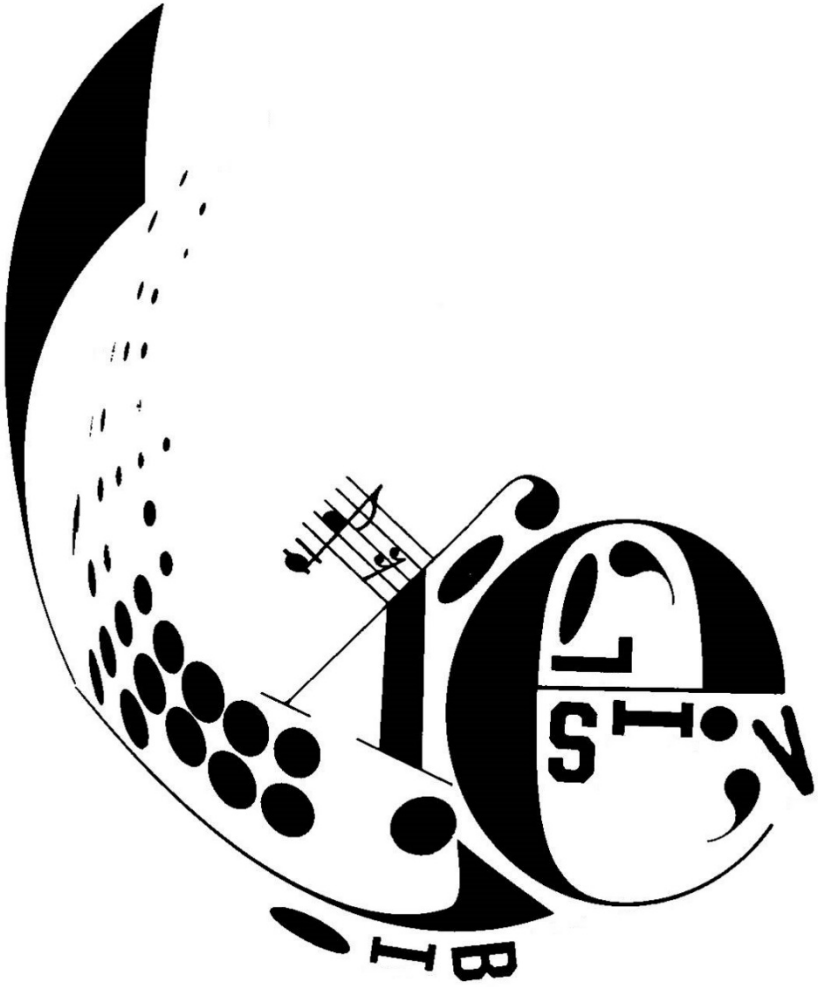

Why this palaver about
have any, involved as
be put around the all
ble? Simply in order
are not subjects? (That
are not subjects rather
He is present as a
there is something to
for the changing focus
will make us pause
to realize that Pop Art
standing, if embarked
sequitur. He is engaged
tation of nature in
the dates and places
than others). They
operative nature, he
signs of humanity to
the dialogue. Someone
not now informed
nothing in it to grasp

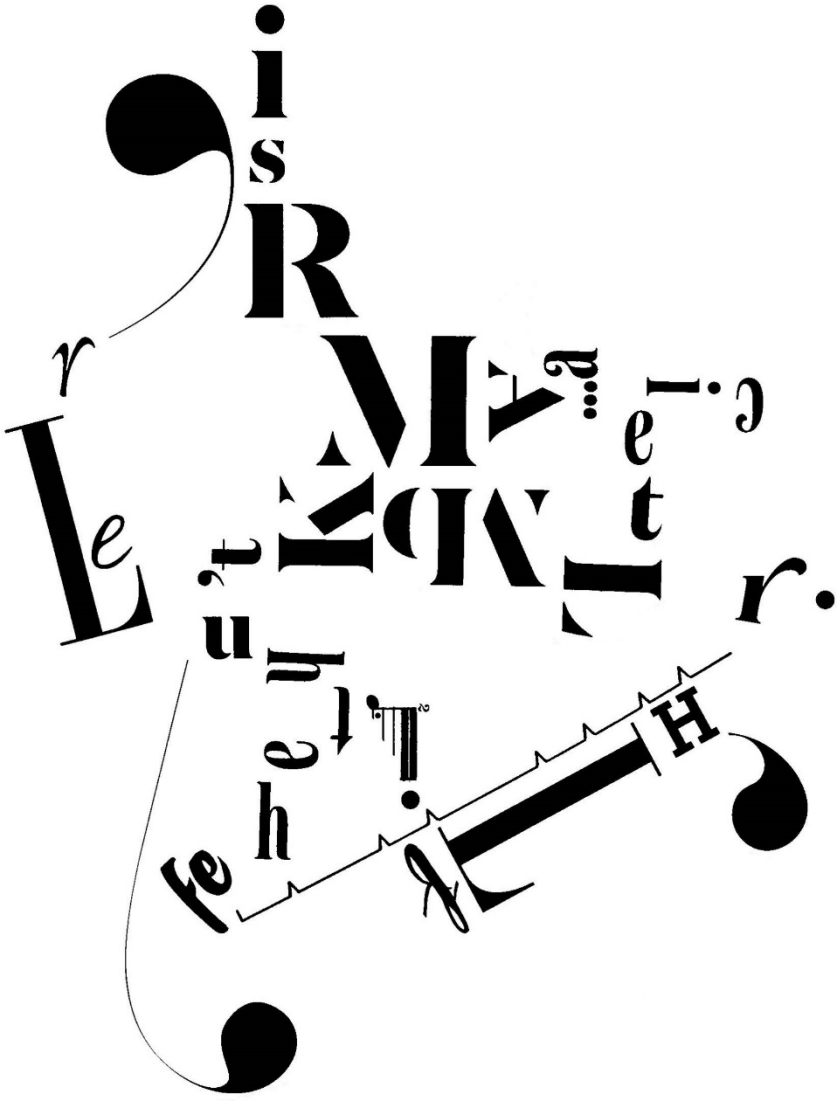


from the *sound-off* series

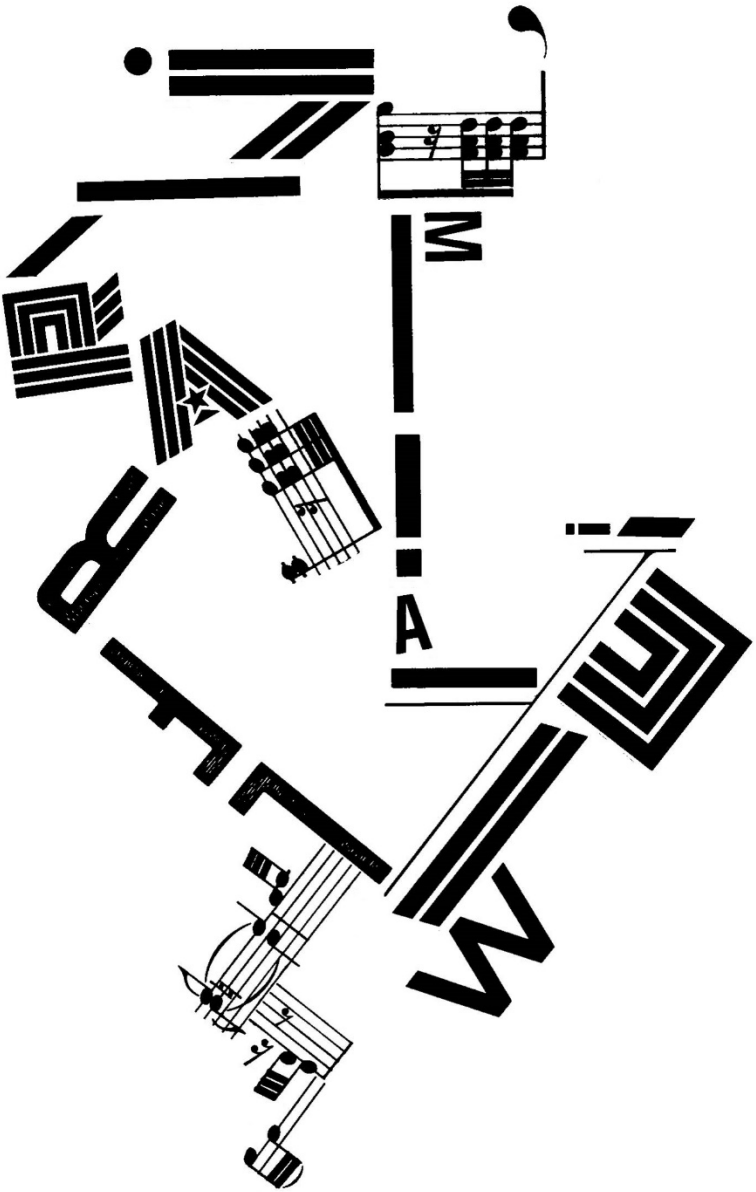





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this is the point where say we began before all the circling to beyond the beginning and how we require from each other the specific codes of our dna and all else that was taken and mathematically strung together in the quietness of tongue and swallowed what was said before as i emphasise as i say with one hand not the other bleeding into the bleakness of our antiquity and affirming the way we take the no or the yes in its insurmountable context of the gold and always gleaming journey through seas of your emblem pirates and the film you promised from the upturned tip of your mouth to the rotting boot studied and slung in the water to rot beside your human form and its elemental shadow a stumbling block to all your attention and good wishes.

and in that froth a memory flashes an electric shock throughout the body and it leaves your clanking tongue open to the vowels to the consonants of you formed in the remnants so to speak of what had been your perfect desire until it rotted and fell from the sky hidden beneath that dark cloud which parts my vision and leads the pinprick with the twisting of your amoral knife blurting out into the night what had happened since birth and back the trembling destiny of his lordship and sunk into the lunacy of compromise and the careful reflection of the glass in your eye now shattering and falling into the distance with your weary trope fitted out with an hour glass figure sponsored by the future fall and burying of mankind.

together they in orbit praise their own ancestors for the i journey where went the man the woman where they met and parted on mountain ranges which curled across the geography as we rewound the eclipse as the moon sunk its call to midnight and so to the other shadows joined each other in one breath and in and out and in and out the deep longing for the first word bubbling up and seeking to lap over the last and kiss its lips with the dna of hope still clinging to that dna of hope despite the hours spent in this loop of despair now give me the chance to carry my loved ones across the border until it hurts. not to leave you to the border guards but to explain to you their language and the kinks it induces in my mind.

the solitary march goes on from left to right igniting in the night sky a body of work so blessed and beautiful the formation can be seen can be seen and clearly recognised for the departure and the leaving heading towards god knows where and joining us at the black and white memory now bleached

with his grasping forward into the long grass of the swamp and gently to take on other outlooks with the curvature of my smouldering spine and to say loud

2. and clear from his exit into the forest of another a to b text with the sub human portion looking for that first stone for my pocket the one with the lord's gentle graffiti in this case fish and what continues to be said along the shore and from your bleeding mouth and he says he has seen the angels and my eye rejoins the others in the dwelling as it stands.

3. we run successfully into the light and with us rushes the verbal shadow which first marked out word and the ran on and took it bleeding into the next verb which is where as a boy i first came into the argument offering us another chance to jump the fences and then tally-ho race into our proud to be free destiny as if there had ever been any shame in it except from the grandparent's point of view as we shared again the black and white photographs walking with a donkey across the sand and declaring did you meet jesus too and hush little baby who cries out from his first stretch towards and we all gather in the house to celebrate but he had disappeared from the room with her and i felt the dryness in my throat and then the tightening just before i try to scream but no sound comes out. all that's left in the morning is her bible and the word traitor bitterly scrawled across my dressing room mirror in lipstick and i mutter to myself not to feel that sort of pain again. and i need a whisky like crazy but know that won't get him back from the strangers who even now are teaching him to crawl and to gabble and soon it will be walking and then talking. the same old verb that captured him.

4. and so we trade the stories you and i the pleas that overwrought our ma and pa and as we tried to call them back and swept out the outside room in the stables and my shortness of breath and garbled poetry written on my father which could then be said to be though brighter than average to have a screw loose or to put it another way mad as the rock he crawled under to reach the desperate shore and having spoken to the assembled my father is none too sure we don't have that sort of money anyway in the kitchen blaring out reliance on the black and white forms of jays and doves. so nothing gained then by all that learning. i'm still as mad as ever in my head and in my heart or somewhat simple pleasures may be returned say things have to turn from the darkness towards the light where i first cried seeing

grandma drop a tear and then getting and louder and people chanting items they still want to rescue including babies names.

5. we all grow up to juxtapose our fears in line with the leaping of this lion deep into the jungle of the unknown and our precious jewel expression bleeding from the mouth and then wide-eyed in the centre of comprehension a perfect image from childhood era and the feeling of running free in the park with no restrictions beyond the forming of the wrenching of the tearing of a soul now grown old and weary with the 123 of the dance along the outside edge of the park. it looks like the same one. but don't they all and in memories there were rituals of late night escapades in the darkness meeting gillian, rosemary and edith and that always seemed like a bit of a giggle but now and then i struggle to remember their faces or which ones thrilled me more than the others. at times i weep a kind of withheld sob. i cannot remember some of it or all of it it is all the same in the dreary ruins of my heart.

6. i'm sure there were times when a poem from me or else say a smile would have been appropriate even if only following the trail and 123 getting out of the trap so liquid and urban in their faces right from the very beginning of ma and pa and later on any other human i cared to smell so sweet to my astonished eyes which say at 123 had already had enough and the jowls rolling over his/my tears while a luxury of businessmen bemoan my fate. they have no right to consider me or how i gasp or grasp a political or social or social virus and the name of that which came to us we didn't even know. i have now 123 eaten as much as i can of ma and pa but still the indigestion in my gut rumbles. and the strings of my thoughts fire new arrows towards an oblivion of humanity. i do not know if this is my cross to bear alone or if it can be cured. who would? go find them and ask them.

7. that always waters my eyes tho to see the bloom of another day no matter what direction perhaps the head says right and the legs say left and then there is a shouting match to see who wins the day if you can to praise at the top of your voice the birds and the clouds and all the other fixtures on which the world rotates from the small word at prayer to the gentle flight of a new squint at the flight and from the ground to the fixtures it beggars description of the last one who came dancing or drooling from his ruby red lips with the one a matter of rehabilitation say not just the once or twice or not stood stock still 123 but the heart racing on the border between running and brisk walking and his heart remembers gillian, edith and rosemary and the claws

they exhibited in scratching up the stark century of love being a matter of 1,2,3 and we can all see from which direction the preamble comes and into which direction the ember passions are going so with this word let me spit it out of my mouth and offer us no comfort but to say with this word we are brothers and sisters dark as the moon.

8. beaten out of me. the trinkets of foolish emotion to say walk round this little backwater this little day long ditty of the time when when say 123 and the listing and the listening from one ear to the next and to counter it with some volume of your worth hidden in the syrup of your english and your mastery of crawling from adverb to adverb with the chance to commune with the alphabet of snakes who hasten to beget gillian, edith and rosemary with your baby song passions cast into the wilderness and there keeping to the infernal clock the body words that say to you to kneel to crawl in and amongst the atmosphere as it once was or say as it always was the heat just another tour of the garden without shame without release its skin of purple prose coupling with the phrases to love i love for a while. later after the bloom i will decay and die sunk into my own features and withered across from the original vows i made for you as i bled into the corner of the garden of i where the flowers faltered across my intended path and led me here crawling into the a to b of new words always formed with the clicking of my crooked tongue. on fire with the truth of your orbits.

9. it's cold. there's no way of going back on my decisions. i love you. i cannot reach you. gillian, edith and rosemary. i'm at the top of the garden of flesh now with no idea of the way forward or back again to my steamy youth where i indulged in nectar of birth and took it with me fully into my mouth along with the juggling of verbs and consonants and take them solid in my gullet marching from a to b declaring that none of us are really ever lost. that is to say boys and girls that none of us gets away with a form of words or so to speak without ingesting as da must have ingested the body odour of fools who cannot wipe their own arses or is it me da cannot even now wipe my own arse in memory of ma and da and the way she dressed me up in her own image said my skin is your skin step inside as a husk and keep warm son let me call you that for always even when we are all blessed with a new and brighter world where anyone who can play the piano is welcomed into the snug is welcomed into the snug. and then beaten about the face and his lip razored to save his feelings. 123. his blood ices through his body and then oozes on the floor. he could not save them. not any.

10. adrift and moving in the forest as fast as i can. left and right are the sources which i swallow my worth in the shape of a delicious gnawing at the bone just to be let in and covered with the flesh of my children who i would save and raise were it up to me but now i cannot see anymore along the path where once my parents guided me and albeit i fell not just say the once but again and again as if it was a constant. it probably was a constant like the 123 and the weary jump for joy and all the battles we have won and yes of course some were lost but overall this thirst 123 was worth it and distributing words in the countryside where the poor wretches had mostly never heard them before and i lean and bow and scrape and kiss a melancholy tune mylud which will hold us all fast into the future. no, surely you have not come for ma and pa i agree they are disgusting but what harm do they do with their fruitless loins and stinking vocabulary. would you not more prize me so sleek of tongue and all the better to see you with.

11. there's an aching. hi ho on the tip of my tongue. remembering gillian, rosemary, and susan. always on my mind. but offering no firm conclusions. i cannot say if i found one fairer than another although they were certainly fairer than my mother and anyway i could not stay at home for much longer for i am of an age now when say i am of an age now when say i am of an age now when the taller ones will cramp my style with their constant cries of yes you can and no you cannot until my brain bleeds covid from its temples and all the others rush to warn me to stay on this path away from the narrow path of societies new justice heaped upon the weak and vulnerable and i admit there have been times when i counted myself among them but then to my eye came the bikers and the heavy drug users and the heavy heavy. and i said hi to them and admitted them into my garden stripped as we were of all honour loving instead our camus and sartre and any stinking philosopher to justify our lifestyles sinking as pigs in shit across the news pages on trivia that never really mattered and then i yearned again for ma and da and a clean sweep to keep my head on my shoulders and so i strode into infinity armed with adverbs and nouns and a leaning towards the ironic and the bizarre which sense or nonsense my family never really understood, my real family and i clung to shadows of memories written in the dust. and.

12. you there. he stumbles and mumbles there we go again you god of split lip tearing at my tongue and the ritual of body love for another i said for another along his garden fence and away into the far distance of joy and sadness of a joy forever tinged of sadness since the bullies gathered in the school playground and chanted his name and his ears bled with the anarchy

of it all of how there was nowhere else to turn ms frobishire and the other frigid english teachers had already snubbed his intelligence and bandied his name as useless useless cried the echoes and even down by the canal with vanessa he could not consider any salvation but a plunge into the murky deep just like a plunge into the murky deep philosophy of existentialism and how far *waiting for godot* had actually taken him with the slime we say the slime of human shit which turd he eats again every so often just gently to remind him where his brother had ended up and now a man of the cloth although refusing to believe a word of it nor the bible so he does not know in which context his brother could be said to be religious and so he must give him a stern talking to if ever he turns up at the house again. which he very much doubts. ha, ha! take that. there's a black eye for you my friend. i'm off for a walk among the graves to mourn for mankind.

13. his words float before his eyes in rage and mixed with the constant beerswill a to b as he traverses the planet with a dog on a tiny bit of string that he tells to hurry up and at the speed of running from the bigger boys and pa says just punch them one by one displaying that he misunderstands entirely his nature why mother i wouldn't hurt a fly and his eyes squint trying to wash out the 123 of camus *the rebel* and feeling like a rebel himself but from what? no-one can fathom it and even despite his long walks in the park with the girls accompanied by the dog or is it by the god no-one penetrates his armour to pierce the skin till it bleeds even more than the bloody shards of thought filtered from his mind and we are back again to the split tongue and the verbal ticks of a good clicking as he wages war with the questing turmoil inside which never stops asking why, why, why and whose heart settles on it just is and he plucks at his eyelids to tear from them the clumsy vision of ma and pa of him as a cleric for that was their chosen profession for him being sensitive and highly strung but he fell to the floor infected by demons and laughing and kicking his feet towards the flames as he swore allegiance to the bikers and their retinue and he began again on this more boozy phase which saw him consume a vast vat of alcohol daily and also rubbed it into his flesh and maggot sores.

14. he takes very seriously the sadistic dancing caught between the lines the variable forms that trigger iodine and blood as tears fall down his fertile mouth and force it shut for what good would it do him to say he understood he understood more in the whirligig in the sense of listening as he says his piece and i takes the clicking tongue and rams it into the roof of his mouth his brother declaring that football beat literature hands down and best of all were the masses of girls ripe to be plucked into womanhood but he is too

shy even with the likes of gillian, vanessa etc even those who he had run with all his life and were of no immediate threat but he cannot talk to them why, why, why and his teachers at school tell him off for his reading list and it starts to fester just starting to make him feel bitter why i should not read the outsider the way i feel it's quite natural. his lonely nature in his self-imposed isolation and what would he ever make of love no-one accepts him and i feels they never will as he steels his inner self to face the rejection but not allow the others to beat him with their sticks and stones which actually don't apply. and he dips his head in the water, the cold, cold water and clutches at straws to breathe free as he doggy-paddles his way round and round his little imagination drowning in ideas that he dare not breathe breathe breathe and so he spits out the water from his tiny lungs. and thinking about these things later he lights a cigarette and ponders very hard about the ebb and flow of his life. not a life. not a book.

15. he quarrels it's always a pleasure to see you vanessa as we stroll through the park your eyes boring into my soul and the inconvenience of another human being requiring answers and proclivities demanding i's tender intentions and the reason why he gags at the stink of her perfume and the books she has read without attempting to live a full life saying sitting in the drawing room reading bukowski and skinning alive an atom of self worth and agreeing with his tormentors so saying therefore i will become seriously depraved but that seeps back into his consciousness and slips at split tongue on the remoteness of the farm and the journey to circumnavigate and the winds blow and howl and seep into its 123 of consciousness and the letters that i and vanessa wrote about anything and everything we could summon into muster and to bring again to split lip where he picked out a dog for her and she a god for him and often they walked through the back alleys breathing heavy but not once not once did they say the word to each other that each longed but couldn't understand and then vanessa told i make love to me and they grunted and sung in the snug in the corner of the wheatfield where he was suddenly born and tutored into life aflame with the decadence that was natural to him and i grew into a shadow. the two of them.

16. a certain wildness clung to the envelope of his skin and he trembled as he told vanessa i am no good for you get yourself free of my breath and the very mouth that opens for you and stumbles into some erotic instinct which captures her devotion and craves him even more but i shuts his eyes and tensing himself for the pulse and surge and i forgets all history and forgives himself the stink of time that had ravaged vanessa's being and he lay down

on the straw and began to mutter the useless catechism under his breath his breath wide open at the cave of his mouth where his tongue lulled in the spit of a different orbit one where poverty and shame meant nothing to the inhabitents tender with their myths and gossip telling them animals for it is long ago they ate and strait into their mouths then out the other end like all the 123 old time shit frantic to revive the dead-end chaos of this broken path and 123 its followers who at once thought of picking flowers beautiful to see but the lice crawl to the music and bring with them a chattering of the death which shroud i crawls into to bless goodnight the sky and sun as the darkness falls and in the morning vanessa's body has disappeared and i contemplates a future with no words no words no words.

17. we smear ourselves with the stink of corruption and we chant and we sin knowing now there is no going back with this fish-hook mouth we must slide on with our morals on fire with our nerve endings on fire and the corporations we wish to corrupt would crush us with their laws. deep covid. and some of us fell into the social machines and tripped the wires against the holocaust deniers and the photographs of hippies fun to watch them stoned and i guzzled down pint after sobbing pint with southern comfort chasers and then he didn't care especially what noise now came from the direction of ma and pa nor his sister and any of those strung out in the alley who had at first called out to him. none of them could be recognized and he pulled his ragged skin over his bones and made no words no words no words crawl through the scream of his future where the lice crawled and waited and he had to remind himself of no going back. all that goodwill had been murdered by i who had outgrown his fears and now travelled by his wits to this place or that or the other and he would stop and pass the time of day with any strangers although oddly enough not many seemed to greet him. part of a crowd but i was feeling lonely to his boots. to cheer himself up he invented an experiment where he and two others would go to hyde park with blank yellow post-it notes and hand them out to see people's reaction. we think it is fair to say it was mixed with a lot of people being very angry. use that anger, use that anger to kick back at society i cannot blame him enough all the way back to the blackmailing of enid and she falling under his spell giving birth in the shed having eaten nothing but coal in the past few months and they said, they said it was his fault and older now he turns to dylan and lying on his bed listening to a record drunken pa lashes out at him and says music is for entertainment not politics. thought i he has misunderstood the lyrics to *maggie's farm* and there is my cue to leave and so in his mind he revisited his teenage years but the snake had spread. the damage had been done. 123.

18. remorse from the virus piercing human waves in the bodies of thousands upon thousands of victims their lifeforce ebbing away with no defence in the past. none in the future. the waste of their deaths will haunt the priests and upright citizens who went too close their nature being this but now the wrath of the virus seeps into their minds as he limps on remembering the past and setting it against the future like some godawful sci-fi movie on a loop without end and he urges those with the leeches to keep away from the multi-coloured bleeding and the mass graves much worse than his nightmares and yet he mumbles clicking and clucking his tongue to the past adventures where he had held up a sort of robin hood complex just in male bonding not with a seed to inject this covid into other beings but he mumbles at them all and dresses all in green but they do not understand and now his friends far flung and battered against the world he had no words to feel the horrible cancer of this memory unfolding before his bloody eyes where the only trick the way to survive was to not feel the pain anymore but to walk with the ritual humiliation as it told him much worse would come and the lice crawled into his mouth and he gagged and gagged on the prose he had read as a youngster and how going into his teenage years unschooled as he was buwkoski was his favourite poet and beckett his favourite writer and these did not even mean anything in discussions with ma and pa. freud and jung in their pure form he read then too. as his teachers showed their astonishment he took it to mean they thought he was just too stupid. turn turn turn again for i have no use for my failed submissions.

19. back and forth back and forth the time took its toll oh of when i was young and reading jung and the teachers said he couldn't understand it you don't read jung until the third year at university said his favourite english teacher did he think there was something wrong with the system or something wrong with him. both. back and forth back and forth became a means of survival so words back and forth and unexpressed love back and forth no joy in the mountain streams and wide open fields the cattle chewing the grass and finding a nothingness in his dead eye the one he kept chlorinated on his workbench like the vice clamped over his clamped over his clamped over his no reason for articulating this perverse situation and he just felt clumsy, ugly and afraid. he feared the rejection of others so much he rejected himself. little actor that he was enjoying playing bit-parts at the theatre and then delighted to discover the theatre of the absurd. beckett and the others offered new life a reinforcement of how he saw the world carved into the very core of his being now the fibre of the maggots inside his mind

which had crawled down and captured his body isolating him in his own loathing for the tragedy the tragedy of whatever blood ran in his brother's veins wild and free and he strung out on covid isolation. no further no further into danger. in and out.of the prison. of his own yearning.

20. yet there were times for sure that he knew beauty but he cannot recall ever thinking it was justified. certainly not by the broken. words which lay trapped at the back of his throat and projected by his tongue rasped and blistered describing perhaps it was only the way he saw it but the dogs in the pub the gods in the pub were alsations and he trembled steady or they'll o after you and he had said he was aware life was not all peaches and cream and sometimes he climbed the hill to his destiny and other times he refused to. what would it matter in the pointlessness of it all. or was that a hopelessness. or were they the same thing. he was an avid bob dylan fan just for the words those that exposed the hypocrisy and injustice. and yet he felt sick that so much pain could feel good to him. could brighten his smile. even worse was liking leonard cohen songs because they made him laugh. until suddenly he didn't laugh at them anymore and then the stars in the night wept and the girl with the oranges who had forgiven him for being too shy to talk to her stabbed him in the heart with a flicknife and he was rushed to hospital screaming obscenities at her but it was really nothing in the violence of the emotions coursing round his body. just another silly cow mucked up by the media. well, what did she expect from his profession and what did he expect from a witch and eventually he woke up to an alarm ringing loudly in his head. get out get out now.

21. and get out now. the flowers wilt across the ruby-red of the deaths a constant figure leaping out of the shadows which attach virus 123 an open sore upon the flesh after the births of son and daughter the collaborators crawling on long miles taking with them the memory of every extinct animal and the 123 of the vows he took mistook and passed on further down the line to a pledge of human kindness which had escaped him ever since the lord came down and contributed left, right and centre against the omission of each incredible letter a and the searchlight of the vowels the vows which formed in his spittle held up against a jagged tooth now a rotting tongue captured in his youth with something further anything further to say deadlines facing injections and the old were sent away and told to die quietly without any fuss and life goes on in the covid song and the gestures 123 of his recollection the crowded dancing parties the bottles of pomaign fumblings under the coats and making a note of anything so obtuse that it could be sharpened with a tumour rough and ready to escape

out of the connecting door and down the fire escape on the chalkhill estate and chased away to applause and then dashing madly they both have knives and they would never do as wives we bargain and barter with them for a piece of what might prove to be impossibly for the free and after all just an empty gesture moved from sharing a flat with my best friend back home again. forward and back. forward and back. the thumping in my chest but i digress it's not me or you. it's her at last. a partner for the impossible snow. a challenge for the farce. amid the future and the past. the reckless prayers abandoned fast. i abandon tributes to the past that lacerate my piercing tongue.

22. she said the way out say could be to vaccinate and vaccinate then vaccinate again against your my writhing in the human gods of your my experience from whatever tale they may tell in fortunate retribution of virus contact eliminating covid words from covid eyes and the politicians who wrought them the powerful rhodes boyson the colourful rhodes boyson and i recall that on a train as a young boy i spotted a postcard full of racial curses and snarling and i felt quite sick and tore it up throwing the pieces in the trash and reading the daily mirror he shouted something at his dad whose racist stance was to condemn the man of flesh and colour just because he was made that way and as bob dylan shook the house he wondered if he should have come back or toughed out his outside life now caught in lines and refusing to give in he reads and reads perhaps watches all the presidents men. and he feels her warmth from top to toe feels her tension moaning low and he lets loose on the act of love vaccinate we must vaccinate she says and he thinks she's off her head the telling eye as the poet replies the one he goes to london and reads on the stage with 123 and its back and forward everyday. that just for laughs in their flat he'd cut out the names of foodstuff and put them into the fridge. when they asked him why he said it's the thought that counts. the word love is crushed inside him. iced out by fools who mistake the reasons for his silent disdain the leper calls a sad refrain the cards are drawn and it's a trip along the portobello road and a drink with lemmy among the hordes of girls who follow him up and down the street. it's a nod 123. and a defeat.123. lines of recognition fall from his eyes. he is here and nowhere. caught between darkness and light. passions burn. a hound shrieks. no prisoner rules his urgent release.

23. it's your fault. it's your fault. it's your fault. this endless repetition and blood loss. torn from the gut in the first place allowed to fester in your dna the vanguard of your father let us blame biology oh no my mistake completely for the i will i will kill and then there was the murder which had

you fleeing back to ma it could just as easily been you and now you see through the mist to the undancing of the butchery and the fear tingling the spine god thank-you it's not me dogs are guilty in the war no pardon even from the poor just slashing at my drunken brain but not expecting any consequences certainly not amongst the girls who all carry knives and to see if you would tremble held one at your throat and then just laughed as you walked out of friday 13 which struck you as just violence after violence and it all made you sad no melancholic and wistfully thinking over the bloodlust years how the symphony of your passions rise and fall in the night-time fray of masturbation and the nigh-time release of covid-19 where it lurked in the darkness of the vowels you formed and along the coast outside these walls so 123 123 the yearning for some sort of recognition of the shadow which cast over his mind changing perspective on everything and what is the total of covid deaths now? should i carry that on our shoulders too advancing into the deadly unknown and vaccinate and vaccinate put on a ballet at the royal court where they are all caught in their lockdown bodies writhing in time with swan lake and i tell you i can't see say what it is to me. some sort of skin i've since shed and walked for miles on bleeding feet contemplating for good or bad the conscience that the virus had. none. so vaccinate vaccinate then walk some more spread your covid through the poor. he held a mirror up to his face and opened out his scream another world without human succour on the verge of collapse this world and he. she trims his beard eats his deadly flowers.

24. hundreds of thousands of pointless deaths. a waste that whispers through the tv then charges along borders howling body parts and disembowelling the creatures lurk in the future and the past at once we are guilty with no pardon the rites of passage stir our soul the gradual build up of the time i played and leaping across the vaccination halls with i entranced i enthralled and not wishing to add the curse i often talk backwards which i agree is worse now there is no time to alter our history to redeem ourselves in something new or the acting that we did at ickenham youth theatre which only put on music hall fare without controversy or a blaze of reviews like the ones i wrote in the newspapers that were a volley from a place of safety but no-one knew the darkness inside me or the vaccine i so badly needed to keep me away from those dark places like a moth to a flame on the wildest night in the dankest cellar it burns my soul to encounter the innocence of the aftermath as i pulled out my tongue and ripped myself free seeking a new future without so much care without so much burning inside without the coils of the snake inside bleeding and reckless as an existentialist riding thru the dancing light that cut right through him by a pale moon on a lonely hill left once more to decide.

Heller Levinson

lurk arises

oblongs, . . . confabulate confect
confetti bounce de-
clivitous incline dare
braise
bulldoze
transposition remonstrance heap
court coalesce,
partition pierce
branch perforate
interpolate,
in the dark night of world abeyance
draft undulate song surmise

lurk across dark

dudgeonpall over
hauntfilled groundpit. Range
gauntcoiled granuleplier stagger from storm,
the upstart, the
foul-whetted.

Phosphorous-bonewinding wards
gnaw vociferous

lurk irks

bombinate bombard

wattle

wrest
perforate

trephinate

icono—

clas(h)(t)

percuss
perdition
perpetrate

p e r

t u r
b

"day turned to night"

day turned to night. gradually. the clouds rainbow tinted. they sat in lounge chairs with gin and tonics and said, "beautiful." "beautiful." they were in complete accord, which was not usual. each was drinking the same or similar drink— there were differences in ratios of lime to gin— each was thinking their private thoughts. he thought she still was attractive, still had her youthful body, but her face was wrinkled, the skin crinkled by the same sun that could pass through icy crystals in the air and make rainbows. she thought he was not the man she had married. he was shrewder, heavier, paunchy really, and his curly hair no longer gave him the appearance of cupid. he had money and they had security and that was enough. wasn't it. she couldn't expect that their life would be a romance. but, she did. she poured herself a fresh drink from the pitcher between them and put in two wedges of lime. He followed her example, but with one lime.

they had no children. had they had children, they would have had something to detract their attention from each other. but, they would have produced offspring like themselves: conventional, indifferent, solitary, seeking solace in whatever the world said offered solace. a home in a low-crime neighborhood where all the residents were western european; jobs in the city where the sole purpose was to maximize profits and to make money; to take vacations on cruisers and be pampered by dark-skinned people who lived off of people like them in caribbean islands. to thwart as best they could the progress of the new immigrants. to pay no increases in taxes of any kind.

day was nearly done. the blackness was undaunting, as their porch lights went on automatically. it was a new moon, not an eclipse, but the sliver of a crescent. they both looked. "beautiful." "so fine." they chimed like the bronze bells hanging from their porch awning. "remember rome," he asked. she had a dim memory of a vacation they had taken years ago when they were newly married. "yes," she said, without giving away her loss of reminiscence. "there was a moon just like that when we sat at an outdoor cafe drinking espresso and eating pastries. you pointed it out." she didn't remember, but she knew as long as she went along with him, he wouldn't notice. "yes," she said wistfully. "it was beautiful then and it's beautiful now. a beginning." "yes. a beginning." "even now," he added. she did not chime in this time.

it was getting chilly and they decided it was time to go inside. "i've got the pitcher. we can finish it later or put it in the refrigerator. whatever we want."

when he said this his chest expanded just a bit, like a male pigeon's when it's following a female.

they both walked a bit like they were on the rolling deck of a ship towards the house. it was a ranch house, something they had agreed would be best as they aged, so they wouldn't have to climb stairs in case one or both developed arthritis sometime in the future. it turned out to be a wise decision.

"i think i'll turn in," she said.

he turned on the giant hd television and sprawled on the leather couch. "i'll be there soon," he said, although he didn't mean it. he had nothing in mind when he turned on the set, except to have an excuse to not join her in the bed. he preferred his own company now.

"good night," she said as she made her way to the back rooms where the master bedroom was located. "good night. sleep well."

He slipped out of his clothes to make himself more comfortable. He went through the hundreds of channels available on his tv, but he couldn't find anything to his taste. They didn't make dramas or series the way they used to do.

He switched on his private collection of the broadcasts of the old westerns, particularly Wagon Train. He identified now with the churlish but consummate craftsman Ward Bond, who took passengers beyond their accustomed boundaries in the post- civil war years. it's how he imagined his younger underlings looked at him at work. he was the manager of a solid hedge fund and he had earned his place and prestige there. he was the kind of man women and young men looked to for safety and guidance in their search for security in a dangerous, uncertain world. when he passed a whole world would pass away. there would be no one to replace him the way they had replaced Ward Bond. he was no character. he was the real thing.

he fell asleep from the alcohol and the hour and slept through the night on the couch. it was big and soft enough to bear his weight comfortably. when his wife woke before he did, she passed him without speaking and went directly to the kitchen to make coffee for herself. She had her weekly tennis lesson that day and was looking forward to it and to seeing her coach, a young man from the neighborhood who took a special interest in her game. Her husband knew all about the lessons and his wife's illusions surrounding them. he was not in the least jealous. he knew his wife was too concerned about appearances and

security to disrupt their routine. besides, she didn't have the depths of feelings that caused crises.

as to himself, he would go into the office today and see how his protégés were getting along. he was semi-retired now and only went into the office when he wanted. the choice was left to him.

Patrick Cahill

Sunk City

Fingers pinned against a gate. Sunk City, its favored hues gray and black and smoke and puce. Civic attire. The stylus a tongue inscribing its exits' graffiti on the muddle we've become. A yellow bird flowering in the mud, snow flecked, slush to ash, a seasonal omen or error. Its black streaks breathe in the colors before they melt. Evade erasure mimicking night, its million streaming flakes. A yellow feather pinned to a coat, letting slip away its threadbare fabric of sun.

Body Blur

You disappear a fog into another body, blur its supple outline. What's left of you an incoming tide of chords, after image, spent breath. Who to whom am I speaking to now? A mouthful of sound, snow spray against a face, crocus up through the snow, daffodils or some yellow outburst. Wings that make visible the wind. All part of the days we've passed.

Night's vibrations holding us in an aura of flying bugs. We cross the lawn, swat away the air we dream. Silver letters shimmering against the dark, flow down its dark screen in rivulets a cryptic storm.

The Wilds

His left eye twitches stitching off rhythms whenever the silent
signals arrive receptors wired birds too their visceral patterns of
flight against the wind's collapsing cities a burning feather a
scorched tongue the snake's timed articulation off beat looking to
shed its skin but aren't we all *no pleasures permitted* he said *till
after the revolution* yet a voice in the wilderness rehearsing still
backstage the circle its perfect absence the dread at its center

Strung together

after the collision of objects mistaken for birds, trees dripping orange, do you think this maybe a small thing, Miles in the middle register, muted, a wedding beside the waves, the long of it and the short of it, instructions along the kelp line, anxiety slipping into its coordinates, shadows stain the slope, his tilt into it a perfect angle, the plant pulled downward into the earth empties the air, the chambers of the chambers of—*smell me*, you said, again that faint promise of a smile, *smell me*—

Everything and Nothing

A hanging rope suspension bridge arcing under the seafarer's bethel eclipse there in another place the ashes of their kingdom a bird in the ruins miming the blustery weather's invisible handout a signifying monkey its grifter's con calls up empty vessels everywhere the trickster damp light shrouds the forest's canopy but in the distance a gold strip along the sea's horizon shedding into the troposphere

Out and About

tubular transit diegetic notes waver in the backlot a puddle of soaking leaves she skips across romantic remnants call to the aesthete they conspire walk through clues breathe together bird-dotted wires above the alley its musical notations spread across a sheet of thought as waves of rain saturated with metaphor sweep up the sidewalk the lone ginkgo covered with yellow fan-shaped leaves their autumn

Paul Dickey

"The Hallucinogenic Toreador" (Dali, 1960-70)

He star**RED** as himself
in h**IS** sky.
THE pixels and frequencies
of **COLOR** delineate space and perception.
"Someone stole my dream
OF the world," he once shouted.
THEre were 2 Salvadors,
and **THE**re were 2 Salvadors.
MAs**T**urbation **ADOR**e**S** himself.
MAs**T**er father Sigmund opens **A** mind's **DO**o**RS**.
Until Dali was not sure which
CAPE was true or which
CAPE was his.

In Japanese, there is no Verb for State-of-Being

the shadows of the animals,
the bears, foxes, and the wolves,
the ducks, the geese,
the low and high-flying birds in patterns

play within the fire
where we only throw our sticks
after a so careful and thoughtful whittling,
but do not exist.

C.S. Fuqua

Occupied

The room with shelves.
The shelves with books.
The books with stories.

The room with a desk.
The desk with a tablet.
The tablet with pages.

The desk with a chair.
The chair with a man.
The man with a pen.
The man with thoughts.

The thoughts with anger.
The thoughts with sadness.
The thoughts with joy.
The thoughts of a room.

The room with a window.
The man with eyes.

The window.
The window.

Clara B. Jones

The "Oppositional" Poetry Of Adrienne Rich and Claudia Rankine

Poets, "Themes," Theory, Criticism

Commenting on a special issue on Irish poets in the journal, *Poetry* (September 2015), Patrick Cotter observed, "To write intimately about your own affairs is to risk making your poetry impenetrable, irrelevant, or both, even when writing in a global language like English. And yet to exclude your own affairs, to eliminate the parochial from your 'epic' entirely risks self-censorship or a denial of one's own truth." These words apply to all poets located "on the margins" or viewed as "Other" by a dominant group (women by men; Blacks by Whites). These words are particularly poignant for describing two female poets embodying duel identities rooted in oppression: Jewish-identified, Adrienne Rich; Jamaican-American, Claudia Rankine.

Writing in *The Critical Flame* (2015), Joshua Jacobs discussed similarities between Rich's and Rankine's projects, emphasizing their common role as witnesses to social injustice. Both of these poets "write intimately about [their] own affairs," but their self-referenced writing has attracted large audiences of readers with different as well as similar concerns. Rich and Rankine address the violence (aggressions and "micro-aggressions") perpetrated by the powerful against the powerless, as well as, the victimizers against the victims—Rich focusing on women and gender, Rankine on Blacks and race, though, emphasizing oppression runs the risk of overlooking the "agency" and "resilience" of marginalized groups. Nonetheless, Jacobs' ideas initiated an important area of comparative political-social-literary study by poetry critics and cultural theorists.

This short essay has three primary aims. First, I highlight similarities between the poetry of Rich, who died in 2012 at the age of 82, and Rankine, a professor at Yale University, formerly, at Pomona College. These women's writings address experiences of systemic, seemingly, inevitable, and sometimes, obligatory, subordinate status, employing English, their primary language. In Rich's words, "This is the oppressor's language yet I need it to talk to you." (*The Will To Change*, 1971), while Rankine asserts, "Perhaps the most insidious and least understood form of segregation is that of the word." (*Citizen: An American Lyric*, 2014). In 1983, the Rutgers University poet, essayist, and feminist poetry critic, Alicia Ostriker, described Rich as "the strongest woman poet in the country, and a major influence" (*Writing Like A Woman*).

Harriet: The Blog, an influential online poetry venue sponsored by The Poetry Foundation, has described Rankine's *Citizen* as "an oft-cited moral authority in the Black Lives Matter movement." Both writers have been recognized with major awards, and Rankine, has been highly visible in the popular press since *Citizen* was published. In addition to addressing the poets' parallel themes of oppression and violence, I suggest that the theoretical roots of both poets are reminiscent of Queer Theory. Second, this essay discusses Rich's and Rankine's poetry from the divergent perspectives of the poetry critics, Ostriker and Helen Vendler. I conclude my article by addressing the questions: "Does it matter who writes a poem?" and "Should all poems be judged by the same criteria?" A concern underlying my contribution is to what extent the projects of both poets depend upon binary, "totalizing" models (male vs. female in Rich's work; White vs. Black in Rankine's), that may be, ultimately, unsatisfactory for a nuanced discussion of whether gender and race are "natural or essential" traits and whether gender and race are social constructions subject to change and [Post-modern] fragmentation?

Adrienne Rich and Claudia Rankine as "political queers"

In her *n + 1* (Issue 23, 2015) review of Maggie Nelson's book, *The Argonauts*, Moira Donegan labeled Nelson a "political queer" who examines "the difference between the subversive form...and the apparently conventional." Donegan goes on to ask, "What are we signaling, and to whom, when we mark ourselves as different—as queer, as [socially] deviant, as angry or oppositional? Above all, how do we think our way out of the easy sense of contradiction?" Queerness concerns roles (social position[s]) and norms (expectations about beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors), though contemporary Queer Theorists hold that "Queer is less an identity than a critique of identity." (see, for example, Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, David Halperin). Referring to political queerness in relation to sexuality, Donegan quotes Nelson: "The time for blithely asserting that sleeping with whomever you want however you want is going to jam [Capitalism's] machinery is long past."

Though neither Rich nor Rankine goes so far as to advocate the dismantling of Capitalism, each poet's work opposes exploitation at the personal and systemic levels ["a critique of identity"]. Rich said, "I cannot now lie down with a man who fears my power or reaches for me as for death." (*Poems: Selected and New*, 1975); and, Rankine wrote about the perceived value of "micro-aggressions" directed at Blacks by Whites: "You are not anyone, worthless, not worth you." (*Citizen*). Both Rich and Rankine would sympathize with Donegan's interpretation of Nelson's book—"The promise of happiness can be a cruel trick

that lures you into participating in your own oppression." (Rich, in Poems, Selected and New, "I am trying to imagine how it feels to you to want a woman." and, Rankine, in *Citizen*, "even as we are eternally stupid or everlastingly optimistic, so ready to be inside, among, a part of the games"). In a recent *Guardian* interview, Rankine states, "By not speaking up, one is complicit." Real change, then, requires overt opposition in order to "jam [the] machinery"—in Rankine's case, Institutional Racism ("to understand the erasure of the self as systemic"), in Rich's, Patriarchy ("diving into the wreck").

Both Rankine and Rich oppose normative codes of race and gender, respectively. In *Citizen*, Rankine wrote of Serena Williams—"Every look, every comment, every bad call blossoms out of history." In *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* (1963), Rich asked, "Was it worthwhile to lay—with infinite exertion—a roof I can't live under?" These and other sentiments ally both of these "oppositional" poets with Queer Theory in an implicit if not public way, counteracting the normal, the centrist, "the legitimate, the dominant." Though Rich is generally viewed as a traditional "lesbian feminist" affiliated with models of the 1970s and 1980s ("My power is present and local, but I know my power." in *Poems: Selected and New*), she, also, seems to be aware of queer theorists' idea of a "fractured identity." Thus, "Will we do better?" (*A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far*, 1981), and, "I don't want to know, but this is not a bad dream of mine." (*An Atlas of the Difficult World*, 1991). Rankine is also aware of the potential for language (the "discursive") to be ambiguous and unstable saying, "A friend argues that Americans battle between the 'historical self' and the 'self self'."—a formulation similar to Judith Butler's (*Gender Trouble*, 1990) treatment of the "performance" of identity ("I am a lesbian, and I have been being a lesbian."). Both Rich and Rankine might say, "I am an Other, and I have been being an Other."

Though Rankine is probably not attempting to grapple with Michel Foucault's (*The History of Sexuality*, 1976) notions of "alliance" (coded regularities or norms) and "power-knowledge" (the power of language or discourse for transmitting norms) as they contrast with Butler's ideas concerning the "performance" of identity or subjectivity, Rankine's poems demonstrate that she has studied Butler's work and is sympathetic to Butler's sensibilities. For example, Rankine writes, "Our emotional openness, [Butler] adds, is carried by, our addressability. Language navigates this. You begin to understand yourself as rendered hypervisible in the face of such language acts. Language that feels hurtful is intended to exploit all the ways that you are present." As discussed below, the emphasis on "language" characteristic of "oppositional writers," including, Rankine, Rich, and queer theorists, contrasts with the emphasis on "form" employed by classical (Formalist) critics such as Harvard's Helen Vendler.

Adrienne Rich & Claudia Rankine—Alicia Ostriker's Perspective

Though having reached, virtually unchallenged, iconic status since the publication of *Citizen*, compared to Rich Rankine has not yet generated a comparably high-profile or ongoing argumentative, including, controversial debate among political, anti-racist, and radical theorists, critics, and academics—though that is bound to change. As a result, my ideas about Rankine in this section are necessarily speculative; nonetheless, I hope to situate her work in the broader narrative of commentary about female poets. Alicia Ostriker and Helen Vendler have published important studies on Rich whose canon has been treated extensively in the scholarly literature and media. In her 2003 book, *Dancing at the Devil's Party*, Ostriker states, "Some of us believe poetry changes the world. I am of this...persuasion, and I have always enjoyed the work of visionary artists dissatisfied with the rule of 'things as they are.'" Ostriker states, later, "The strongest women poets tend to oppose hierarchy; they like boundary-breaking, duality-dissolving, and authority-needling." Though hers is no voice of revolution since "duality-dissolving" and "authority-needling" imply accommodation and reconciliation, Ostriker recognizes Rich's politically radical poetry to be major—indeed, precient and necessary (see Ostriker's brilliant *Stealing the Language*, 1986, as well as, her *Writing Like a Woman* and Dancing at the Devil's Party).

A discussion of aesthetics applied to female poets is beyond the scope of this essay; however, it is of note that Ostriker states, "The true poet (the good poet) is necessarily the partisan of energy, rebellion, and desire and is opposed to passivity, obedience, and the authority of reason, laws, and institutions. [The poet] can be of the devil's party without knowing it." (*Writing Like a Woman*). Compared to Rich's overtly political and disruptive postures, Rankine, winner of a MacArthur "genius" award, is well-mannered, even, conventional, in tone and mien, traits that may, in great part, explain her wide public appeal, the mainstream publishing and reading communities, the foundations, and the media, as well as her elevated status in relation to other female poets, regardless of race, class, gender, or political persuasion. Unlike the rather reclusive, Rich, Rankine is a visible presence on the lecture circuit and might be compared to other poets with a commercial sensibility. Simply, Rankine is a more sympathetic, mainstream figure compared to Rich who challenged norms and roles in ways that might easily be characterized as socially provocative—radical lesbian, unhappy wife whose husband committed suicide, mother of three sons yet virulently angry with men, a "queer" who may be viewed, after retrospective, scholarly, deconstruction of some of her writing, as an intellectual affiliate of the "anti-maternal" radical feminist, especially, lesbian, tradition.

In a now-classic essay ("Ghostlier Demarcations, Keener Sounds," 1973

in *Parnassus*), Vendler, applying mainstream, elitist, Formalist criteria to Rich's poetry, is of the opinion that, while her early [conventional] poetry showed promise, her political work is little more than "sociology." Vendler does not completely dismiss Rich, however, informing us that her political writing sustains her interest and imagination. Like most Formalists, Vendler dismisses "didactic" [e.g., political, "woke"] writing, taking the position that, "Adults do not have to be told what to think." Though, Vendler, diplomatically, judiciously, and with a scholarly mien, expresses her disappointment with Rich's political poetry, the critic concludes her essay by saying, in mildly patronizing fashion, "When new books follow, these most recent poems will, I think, be seen as the transition to a new generosity and a new self-forgetfulness."

Conclusions: Does the poetry of Rich and Rankine have "staying power?"

Queer Theory opposes normative literary theory privileging centrism *via* the "preservation" of (Western) civilized standards, norms, and discourse. How can poetry serve radical political purposes if its end is to resolve conflict? Are Rankine and Rich writing lasting poetry according to classical [Formalist] standards, and does it matter? For Helen Vendler, generally considered America's foremost poetry critic, "lyric comes out of self, not social identity" and out of "temperament," a Formalist perspective which feminist [or other marginalized, underrepresented, or oppositional poets] critics may need to address. One of Vendler's major influences, I.A. Richards (*Practical Criticism*, 1956), asserted that poetry is fiction, not intended to tell the truth. Is *Citizen*, then, only an allegory turning Blacks into fictional characters? Is "institutional racism" a constructed *Racial Imaginary* (Rankine and Loffreda, 2015)? Is the poetry of Rich and Rankine Sociology or Political Science or Journalism, as Vendler would put it? Do Rankine's and Rich's poems rise to the level of Art [and, does it matter]? Ostriker (*Writing Like A Woman*) observed, Rich "says we must be born again by our own agency. We can and must give birth to ourselves, create ourselves."—possibly, it seems to me, because we have been influenced by the norms of hierarchy, including, "institutional" hetero-normativity, sexism, racism, as well as, Patriarchy ("to spin herself a house within a house, on her own terms" says Rich in *An Atlas Of The Difficult World*, 1991).

Poets from marginalized groups might be critically assessed relative to the relationship between values, politics, personal experience, and poetry, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the standards of Formalism and the mainstream poetry community [e.g., lyric, music, rhythm, image, "interpretive power"], deserving to be heard on a level equal with, mostly white male poets [though, also, Emily Dickinson and Elizabeth Bishop] who have been canonized. How, for example, are Language, Content, and Form related and navigated by

"oppositional" poets? Can this be studied systematically? Is there need for a new or revised or alternate aesthetics to interpret and evaluate the poetics of marginalized writers? Writing about Rich's political poetry in 1980 ("Self-reflection as action" in *Signs*), Charles Altieri made the following observations that would apply to Rankine's activist poetry, as well, when he says, political poetry "is not...primarily a political act but a way of insisting that poems and lives can be continuous, can deepen one another when framed as a single process." This perspective may not satisfy Formalists; however, it allows us to entertain a preliminary formulation of a future, inclusive Poetics.

Nicholas Alexander Hayes

Ghost Lineage

A pluripotent shepherd moon
clears a path through ephemera
leaving traces but not bones.

Call infinite reds shift home.

Despite equilibrium of orbit,
lines of causality never
intersect in the pit.

Keep planetoids with meteors.

Look for iron flare

to scrape
membranes free of
fur and folly.

Chewing tanners collapse
wave function
as they keep hide supple.

Root to Nourish Love

Eyes become milky sea.

We tread particle waves,
waiting for a life raft.

Slow days sprout
as the pineal gland
stretches toward

an abandoned city
on a hill,

echoing with tuatara.

Anna Cates

ANTIQUARIAN

Halloween
full moon in four time zones
he calls me

touring
stockrooms of oddities—
his hazel eyes gleaming

one man's trash
another's treasure:
casket crucifix

vintage embalmer . . .
at his behest I read to him
a horror

alone in the quiet
the touch of his hand . . .
cold turkey

Jim Meirose

Ending the Nine Month Long Important as Hell Corporate Conference Call

What? sniped the earpiece, rash rough crushing thrusting at Jamed's ear, saying, What? No? Why now what do you mean no hey what wait a minute Jeff cut the line yeah Jeff like I said cut the audio! Right! So Jeff obeyed generating shuffling plastic on metal clashing while electronically slowing down, pausing silently, stopping, so, yes; go; cut, thus boiling up silence hard sharp and brittle, which packed hard filling Jamed's ear canal, just like it had more than ten times earlier in the God-damned conference call, with a kind of switch-click then a deeper hollow nothing that all screamed all crazy, the show's shut off the plug is pulled there will be no more go on and hang up sounds like it might be like it might be it all the way, eh, yes—at the emergence of this hollow nothing meaning everything gone empty noise, Jamed gave up and pulled the phone from his burning with pain ear, the lobe of which was beet-red from having tight pressure applied day after day of this months-long round table dissertation, which might be over now yes or no but it seems the answer is yes because the pulled-down earpiece hissed with sudden sound easily heard that said in every decibel of its elemental incoherence, OK listen now we're close to the end thank God we're close to coming so wake up; this pistoned out hard from the hot sweaty earpiece, and plunged further on grinding crushing harder yet against Jamed's raw red earlobe, pumping in more pain, that grew intense as that experienced when both ears are being slowly slashed off by unwashed men using old kitchen knives for some silly but very evil reason, only bearable in that this version though just as intense, is only momentary and words once more flowed in against Jamed's tissue thin pink eardrum, smoothly anesthetizing the wounds where the ears feel like they've been forcibly removed, and calming him all the way in through all past the drum and on across the hammer anvil and stirrup and on down spiraling into the centrifugal cochlea, down and down straining for the finish line crowd all cheering, being, gone, all hung up, and slammed down, but the phone can't break no, it's plastic. And, thank God, thank God, thank God, now he can run and go pee.

What time is it anyway?

#35 – Field Work 6
(chapter 35 of *No and Maybe – Maybe and No* – out from Pski's Porch)

Yes, yes. It is a fine day. But, why is that of any importance?

—that is what I will say to him if he says something inane like that. Says something inane like that meaning I am supposed to forget completely the embarrassment he has caused me—

Or maybe he does not even know. Yes it's entirely possible no actually very certainly probably so that he does not even know I got called in by the Captain. Get that. Called in! By the Captain! And, what's worse—in front of the whole of his upper gallery. Dear God, do you know how long it takes to get back in the good graces of the people that matter 'round this rathole of a village once something like what I'd been called in for is seen by the whole of his upper gallery—and on big spouse celebration day, to boot! I mean my very favorite springtime jollyday was totally flattened down and crushed away all spoiled.

So we wise still parked in that state of whippy whappy stormy chaos—half-faded for sure but not all the way gone but really, yes really. Really yes and really so, but nonetheless truly all truly, yes—even so the assigned job of work must go on.

Actually, you have to help me. This signboard's too heavy. It's seven feet across. It's like—here's where it's not a one man job entirely. So here. Roll up your sleeves.

No. It is mine to watch only. If I help it will invalidate the entire observation I'm here to make. It's bad enough we've been chatting away. Here's where I got to draw the line.

The workman turned his face toward a lone fading contrail being absorbed to nothing by the seemingly alive bright blue sky. He pushed his fists into his hips, and leveled his gaze to the watcher, saying stonily, Then I need to stop here. It is impossible for me to go on. Let me gather my tools and let's go.

The watcher forced his face to remain emotionless but his eyes betrayed him as he said No, no. It's not impossible. Here—listen to me—

What listen to you! I only will listen if say you will help me!

No, said the watcher, waving a hand—here's what you do. Pull the posts out onto the grass. Lay the signboard down on the posts as the instructions command and screw it down tight. Then get in the middle and lift the whole sigh and tilt it back and let the posts slide into the holes and there you go!

I am sorry but that is not the order I was instructed to do this in.

What difference does it make if the end result is the same?

It will make a difference inside of me. I will feel different. It felt good to be following the orders precisely and without critical thought. It felt good to be free of the thoughts others might have about wasting the gold leaf on this job. Or of working so hard to sheath the lower lengths of the posts with lead. Or of carving precision dovetail joints for the corners of the signframe—

Wait, hold—you did express some criticism of the need to use dovetailing—

Yes, but—I went ahead and did it. I am human. Humans say things and feel things and vent internal pressures of all kinds being the complicated high performance intelligent breed of machines that we are, but—the important thing is that boring through that cloud of noisy bullshit and hitting the target assigned by authority is something that humans are good at. It got done with the dovetailing. And then the neat bunding of the signboard edges. I did not grouse about that at all. But now what I am being asked to do is impossible. So, maybe that is the lesson I have learned from this eh? Maybe this whole thing though it is ending on this ugly note was always intended to end this way. Maybe I am being taught to not be rigid. Maybe I am being taught that to do exactly as told by authority at all times is a mistake. Maybe I am being told that when tight spots are encountered I must think for myself and push through on my own. Maybe I am being told that the end is what matters. Maybe I am being told that in some situation being obedient can be fatal. You can be right—and the dead right. You know that guy? This has all been fatal I believe. Everything I was hoping for well, now, can never be! God help me oh Lord this is a black hour God help me oh Lord I am worthless take me home—Lord I give up take me take me home right now please God I have had enough you win you do, you win—

But wait what is this?

I am helping you I'm holding the damned thing up okay? Shut up and screw it to the posts before I bust a nut!

Huh? No—why—

Hey okay—okay you melted my heart ok? Take that for a why—just screw this up before I pass out! This Goddamned thing weighs a ton!

But—you are doing it by yourself!

Uh—eh. Oh, so I am! Ehh—so anyway hey like I said get busy—

My God this is a miracle!

Hey! Hurry up talk later please God dammit!

Wind kicked around the workman stooping where are the screws. The screws the rules say are three inch stainless steel wood. As; hurry up hurry! Knock something in this to get it! This hurts! Hurry up.

—I never expected the questions that kept coming. Oh, I expected some, that I could easily answer to convince the Captain that nothing had gone on that could possibly justify my being called by him. But from the first I got—yah I got—got sent totally reeling. But still, it was easy. What message? was my

answer. Though honesty was easy I still knew that someone had lied about something, so—it is good it is very very good that it is also turning out up and down very easy for the signboard to be held just so. Held with the top edge perfectly flush with the post tops. As though the holder had read over my shoulder when I stood before the master with the scroll of orders held out before us. Consider this snap; before us before me before him before what's left over. Given a choice I choose before us. Okay here's a choice choose go on. All right since its definite you're granting a choice then hurry up damn it I choose before us so; finally the correct screws twisted bouncy up out from 'tween the greenieblades then got gripped and one got chosen obeying obey in response to cries of hurryup, what's the snag, this is heavy, come on. That is what I thought but damn if I know why'd I thunk it—but anyway—

Gripping three screws in his lips and grasping up his hammer the workman started driving a screw home in the upper left corner of the signboard. As screws sometimes do it would not start and when tried again it fell away into the grass and the workman fumbled with another.

Hurry up, cried the watcher—hurry my arms are cramping—ahh it hurts damn you

I am trying—don't yell in my ear like that. I can't do it right with you yelling

All right just do it.

Okay.

Quicker!

Okay!

—the next answer was easy—just I just didn't know what the Captain was talking about

Bend reach feel down the ridges of the threads a screw feels no feels yes unlike any given grassblade et—roundy round from the center where it most probably fell into the hole of but. Not there. Wind around the search party off the peak apparently the tiny mountaineer—most likely yes to be a Frenchman or Womanburst as all tiny climbers when that's who it is usually if not always turn out to be circle. The fingers down around the grassy slopes yes no maybe fly out this is not where I want you to be I want you I want you just to be right where you really are eh eh one tiny climber followed by many other tiny climbers with each being thirty three and three thirds percent larger than the prior how many tiny climbers can the line contain before the planet no longer can contain no more eh eh eh e—ah yas the screw rises up sidewise against the soft fresh wood and surrounded by the smell of the interior of a freshly framed out stick built home as back at the lumberyard the yahoo came off the oily pulled up size small fork lift just the first of a line of size small fork lifts in line he wad can I help each one beind one quarter of a tenth of a millimeter smaller than the prior the first screw turns easily—When will you have these screws in? Et et I help you need a board or two eh is what he was

going to say something like that and like that how many size small fork lifts can join the line before yes I need a large panel seven foot by four foot by half inch thick panel for a eh eh there are no such sized small fork lifts in the western hemisphere any more signboard and—ut cannot no. Cannot turn the screw further that you want plywood or solid panel and uh oh, the boss did not provide that detail so eh eh here we go again I replied what are the relative advantages or disadvantages of either son—but—the realization came up and over shutting that up thank God. Those words must have sounded so very insulting but as somebody with many loud heads a la medusa no but let it stand, said Jimmy-to-the-knock, I let back mouthing out okay the first screw's in. So I can let this heavy fuck go. But let me get a second before before before finally-lee-lightly letting go this baby my hippo enter my parlor immediately though you are a stranger this is night there is a dangerous storm all a-brew so better get here before you end up an angel!

Okay.

Quicker!

Okay!

Snatched up cleanly the second screwbaby I supposed I must of not violated the rules of the boss which I, had I been more astute, would have got from him by directing a second line of questioning around the big skirts of the basic bullet-pointed high level instructions; each instruction followed by another instruction being one-half a hexadecimally understood nibble and a crumb shorter in length than itself that Shorter VonShortless style measurement being expressed in characters not bitsy-bities or even straightwords the lumbering manboy slid down his oily forkside all saying, Well, panelboard will resist the weather better yuk yuk plywood is prone to separation being composed of the very very following—a thick layer or veneer glued down onto another thick layer being just one ten-thousandth of a milliliter thinner than its preceding layer this meatless-style bread only blandwich laid down onto another thick layer being just one ten-thousandth of a milliliter thinner than its preceding layer this fat triple-decker being laid down onto until—When will you have these screws in? I swear on this peachpit may the great gorgon blast me until there it practicallyh nothing left to lay down upon the word practically being all operative hey because the calculus said so the Great Gods of Newton Wittgenstein et cetera I mean, Good God, how many more times and ways different can we hint-hint at the overall purpose of this great lumber yard exactly the same as all other lumber yards but for the minor details of there being in some this many boardsticks and in some others that many boardsticks but in this here lumber yard eh eh eh hippo we have our number which is the right number number not the left or whattidy-whup; and water can make this even more complicated by seeping in bursting the molecular rigidity of the very heart of the woods herself and Sir Bambi VonDeerfather will majestically profile his superhorny cloven hooved

self against the northwoods' stately superprecious dawn and say all stately-like, Man is in the forest—so I were you I would get the solid paneling due to the relative imperviousness of its substance if treated right painted and sealed used soon enough not let lay around for decades in a musty dirtfloored cellat with this Ford intake manifold slammed on it that big ironpipe sawed into sections atop it or it spending some more years as the improvised top of a workbench—so I can let this heavy fuck go—upon which Briggs and Stratton overhaul after overhaul is performed which, comfy thunkit, can only happen if you yourself or your father or sons decide to abandon the high fashion designer business for lawn mower repair which will, unavoidably, lead to oil intruding between the molecules of the sweet virginal wood and it will be good for nuthin' but—but b-b-b-b-ut that can't happen you are a fine sort I can tell you give a shit so I will give you a break the solid panel will be yours for about thirty bucks plus tax—my face turned back into itself asking the boss seated there—virtually speaking of course—what it would do and the way was clear to the answer so gripping the tillerwheel we drove into the gale all saying back quite professionaly manlylike, and what would the comparable plywood panel be? I we us it plus any remainder uh, the-those and t-t-t-hese—there we're drove on home.

Hurry up!

Okay! I got it.

A more.

Down grab a third up and in unfumbling slick the phillips solid twist now and twist and grab and turn over turn over all clockwise as time flows all clockwise how do we know is isn't a thing that while in our hemisphere time drains into the future all clockwise but in their hemisphere time drains into the future all counterclockwise, and; and this; their hemisphere's clocks tell a lie an instant that time rolls rightwise but is labeled as leftwise ahay ahee ahoo. To solve this issue would require time. Money. Thought. Decades of design. I mean for your example the water sluicing down the drain up north can be seen felt watched filmed and photographed and so solid stone proof can be proffered that in the north the spiral is the opposite of the shouth but. But but in in but in the case case of time we term to be flowing like water it very well may be that in the north time flows off ahead in one direction but in the south in the opposite direction as oh. In every northern lumberyard the plywood's out front but the solid's in back but in every southern lumberyard the solid's out front but the plywood's in back hey hey that could very well be true madame hippomotapo maybe just it snot bean upperventid out yet hey hey. It could very well also bee that the swarming truth that standing on one's head in the upperside equals standing normally but because it's not expected it's always an imaginary upsidedownness we see. But in the bottomside the upsidedownness of the people there generates the possibility that standing on one's head is normal for all those who wander down to their country they just

feel that permanently standing on our heads is normal for you and me. Hey hey. Even though because we have been told countless times that standing on one's head for one's entire life just can't be, for environmental as well as physiological reasons, we just can't see that we and all others about us are upside down from what we're taught is rightside up so for fear of being blasted by an extremely inconvenient truth we choose to believe that we are patently ah patently still all normal for the exact amount of discrete instant-frames the cinema of our God given lives are allotted by the eternal crap game we refuse to believe shapes each of our successive forward moments, played by juvenile giants crouched down behind the scenes in an eternal state of seventh grade parochial school morningside recess, but too large to play king of the mountain as may the more slenderly framed other-students.

Okay here she comes hang on.

Hurry up!

Yes okay pick out and up three babies two tween the lips one push-tap prick in and start. Hot handletwist one past the next and yet another and on into ten and more yet still—rough splines amber colored handle like there 'eally outta' be some specimen trapped in there. This thing here gone up by my own and with this other one 'till now most only watching will be here how much longer than my end his theirs of yours even. How many times driving this or that thing or what have you punch-holder in it goes it seems all right too east even so too easy that the last twist rips into view a thank God moment but—b-b-b-ut yonder done let go out she falls and here's the next curseword blown past the tail of a thank and a worse thing than that even. A bouncedown all shitty-pop't down 'tween the greenblade, in Summer, when it's too hot even made that way by your God by way of delivering the backhanded order of do not no don't don't even think of work outside today it is much too hot but now he is laughing off where he's up on his gleaming gold throne-chair seat watching you cuss and sweat grip and bend and he's also thrown in, for random use to avoid you becoming immune to your assigned well-deserved punishment, the curses you'd stopped delivering will boil up from the bottom of the petri dish you're being observed on when you crack your head on some wooden protuberance you never think to move someplace else unless you've just nearly split your forgetful self's skullcap over down top of it—three's just twisted home pull four from lips shinily spittledrool lubricated so yah yah this one should be a dream in the driving and what if it is the rubbed hard amberpiss tinged fossil of an old school rock hard driverhandle's near to cutting your palmflesh not quite to ribbons but perhaps to one or two of those types and also. As the twisting over twisting of screw four proceeds the carp in the tunnelflow unseen up north become for reasons known only to the great Jules Bream herself and part-time lutemaster, who by the way is partwise responsible for your predicament due to lack of the necessary focus and commitment—as in thou shalt not serve two lutes simultaneously because they

can only be played one at a time because, for reasons far beyond human comprehension, most creatures in this plane of existence possess no more than two arms and, if they've more, that is almost always accompanied by so many other debilitating deformities that in ninety nine percent of such cases these are stillborn or if not live no longer than hours after birth—whew—nd both arms are required to successfully play one lute. But yes yes yes heyyy sephamore. There's gone the four here's the five and there's been no bitching from yonder helpmate or maybe the softwall drawn back around this ground zero of maximum striving complete this task has soaked the words up so what who cares they'd of been ignored anyhoot turning and turning all blazing palmflesh blister-twisting beginning to haze over with the merciful fog of numbness approved by our merciful savior Jesus Christ himself, who also was pierced for no sin of his own and doubly so—which has to be true because is there anyone. Anyone oh great one anyone anywhere at all who can drive two screws simultaneously one out to the left and the other out to the right—with a screwdriver in each hand; both being turned simultaneously—what a feat that would be. Ah, impossible. Onto the traveling cheap Johnny traveling circusshows' opening nearly free but not quite sideshows; the shout! The crowd!

The crowdshout so thick it is as if from a singly made planetsized lungpair!

Hurry! Hut!

Please hurry bless you God bless you my God!

Drivehome twistright twistleft carpals groaning!

My word truly we are witnessing a miracle!

There went four—on to five—

Hurry hurt!

Thrust home those knucklebusting twisters all champlike, my hero!

God is great!

Six the last just one hand required—which is lucky because all right power's flamed out!

Six half!

God willing—

Six! Ah—

Step back from your baskets arms in the air!

Oooooh!

Oh.

All right let go!

Thank God!

—but still, it was easy. What message? was my answer. Though honesty was easy I still knew that someone had lied about something, so—

All right six paintdrops left to go then it's all over.

I—you're done all the screws?

Yes I am. Now here—

The workman knelt picked up the small paintcan and shook it hard upside down as the watcher said, Why didn't you tell me I could let go?

The workman flipped the can upright and pried up the top with a metal tool.

Are you going to answer?

The workman rose can in one hand slim black brush in the other and dipped it in the white, saying, I guess I just got swept up in the job. Sorry, man.

Sorry? My arms ache like hell. Come on.

What's done is done. Here. Here's the last. Then we can pack up and go.

God it is hard to believe—then what?

—like—were you talking—

Brush downdab up press screwhead one gone.

—in your sleep and work up and—

Brush downdab up press screwhead two gone.

—on talking and—heard the end—

Brush down and downdab up press screwheads three four gone.

—the end of what—

Same exact but screwhead five's gone.

—of what you'd been trying to say all along?

And; the last screw painted over covering covering over to gone all the pasts.

And now there's the same old blanksign that's always been there for no reason.

The townies up the slope had been busily bickering all this time but the first glanced down seeing the two yahoos were gone, and said, Hey, look. They're gone. Where'd they go—wait. it looks like the job's done. See there?

The second glanced down seeing nothing at all out down the shoulderstrip all the way from there to the far crossroads. At once together they realized they were freezing.

Ehh, hey. What are we doing out here? What about a job? What job?

I—

Okay come on. What job?

Okay. I don't know. Let's not stay here. It's getting—cold.

Freezing growing from toes up toward faces busily looking for reasons for nothing, so.

Me either. God—but—let's go for a coffee. My treat.

Sounds great. I think the Captain owes us an answer about why he sent us out here.

Captain? What Captain? What the cold freeze your head? Who the hell is this Captain?

Uh, eh. Good question. I guess—it just came out. Must be the cold.

True. Has to be. Things without reasons well, such things just cannot be—while later at the coffee shop, the owner, dismayed at the fact of there having not been even a single customer for days if not weeks if not months not years eh never ever, realized before disappearing that there'd never been anything there anyway to close up for good even if that's what he decided to do after trying to make a go of it again after this recent smokestorm clears out all gone all away.

Joann Renee Boswell

The Fimbulwinter

"This will be the time of the terrible winter that will not end, the Fimbulwinter."

— Neil Gaiman, *Norse Mythology*

post-election maple leaf optimism
sunk deep in frog-throated decay

pretense is yesterday's game
those fallen reds intensify my blues

I bristle green
freshly sharpened pine

or perhaps hemlock
less poisonous than I'd prefer

divided tides crush salty
our cerulean dot keeps spinning

some say we need each other
oxygen / carbon-dioxide cocktail

give me my Evergreen latte
inimical to humanity

can we launch them into space,
market Red Planet paradise?

by now you're asking
who's speaking?

planetary President Tree
or lonely American progressive?

she sounds tired
either way

Venus

you think it's hot here, surprised
that your physiology isn't supreme

I'm shocked you frozen Neanderthals
even evolved enough to find us

we didn't need your discovery
we flourish regardless, whizzing

around you, quite dramatic runaway tease
your star-crossed microbial mystery muse

you made Earth the norm for life, confused
when alien biosignatures are alien

I don't want to be rude, but, *duh*
open your exploratory instruments wider

such puny imagination —
is it arrogance or ignorance?

poor things climbing into metal
to stroll through your clouds

and all that putrid sweet polluting
those gloriously natural scents

sniff our tantalizing primordial jungle,
how cute your sulfur imitations

what you call rancid
diapers of Satan's spawn

we call Eau de Phosphine
no goddess is complete without

Vile Venus, you reply
(we're merchandizing that one)

persistent, nasty possibility
thirty miles up, you say

hellscape surface, inhospitable furnace —
astonishing you still can't reinvent life parameters

we are even now in your minds
yellow hazy greenhouse energy

an estimated abundance
very final and macabre

William Doreski

How Much We Owe to Brain Death

We fell asleep in New Hampshire and woke in Paris. This happens frequently, whenever we lust for croissants, but it can be disconcerting. What if our credit cards refuse to credit us? What if the Eiffel Tower stoops? What if the Pantheon refuses admittance, the Luxembourg Gardens shed us like ticks? We find a café near the Sorbonne and overhear students critiquing our current President—his childish pink demeanor, his carrot-topped rage. We like the coffee here. Looking into the deep brown Rorschach in our cups we imagine a fresh new romance blazing in our mutual gaze. If only life were as true as fiction. If only the Seine were as bottomless as the Hudson. The ruins of Notre Dame crawl with workmen in those blue jackets I admire. The fire reconsidered everything, yet the stained glass survived. We should reconsider ourselves and each other in such absolute terms. The lead dust exhaled by the fire poisons every surface. These croissants are pure lead mined in Alsace. The coffee is melted lead kept hot just for tourists. When we return to New Hampshire we'll understand how much we owe to brain death, our favorite symptoms singing.

Frozen Charlottes

While my partner tends to her ripening clichés, I wander about the shop. A silver-plate tray of Frozen Charlottes. Soaps from Sweden and France. Pillows embroidered with flowers of indeterminate species. Paintings by a local artist I despise for his supercilious little beard. I slump into a cane chair and pretend to doze off. The shopkeeper, alarmed, waves a fifth of expensive small-batch bourbon under my nose. Too early for me, but my partner's so rapt in conversation she won't notice that I'm spoiling my liver. I accept a modest dose and sample it. The varnished flavor ramps over my tongue and retreats to the darkest recess. How elegant, I think, but try to maintain a poker face. The shopkeeper pours herself a healthy shot and we wave our glasses at each other. Another sip, and the Frozen Charlottes stir from their death-pose. If I remain here long enough to earn another dash of spirits, the Charlotte figurines will begin to dance that dance I most fear and admire, the dance that Liszt imagined but never saw performed. The bourbon settles deep in me, where it will do the most good. My partner has harvested most of her clichés and is ready to go. Christmas is upon us, the streets raving with ice and dusted with shoppers toting curious packages. The dead Charlottes sigh so imperceptibly the mist of their lack of breath rises and ghosts out the door, merging with the clammy weather.

Kafka in Place

Kafka seated at his desk in the insurance company. He's shuffling important papers, valuable papers, contracts and the dreary reports of actuaries. His salary could support a family, but although he has been engaged to several women, he's too tubercular to marry. He lives in his fiction, his secret undertone. He writes many letters to family and friends, who feel his sour breath lofting over Prague. The days pass like kidney stones. Kafka's stories pile up in little heaps of angst and existential dismay, although the word "existential" would puzzle him. He coughs a lot, but so do most people in this damp gray city. Still, that's good enough reason to call him "Kafka," rather than the more familiar "Franz." He doesn't know that Edmund Wilson will dismiss his work, preferring the graces of Fitzgerald and Hemingway. He doesn't know that his friend Max Brod will preserve his corpse in amber. Those of us who have been to the penal colony and survived that hideous machine, that cosmic bloodletting, appreciate Kafka's attempts to clarify. Those of us who have suffered the knock on the door, the desultory interrogation, who have confessed to whatever doesn't need confessing, accept his blocky little worldview. In memory of his fragile sincerity, we cough up blood and spit it on the sidewalk. Let the post-ward paradigm and all its casual erasures be thus infected, dying at home in bed.

Slime and Spoor

Yes, you're tired of mopping up my slime trail. And I'm sick of scraping up your spoor. I'm sorry about the mess, but your residue is crude as mine, and its source equally fetid. The problem is that our shells have cracked. We aren't the integrated creatures we once were. Note how our old friends keep their distance. Not because they fear the spread of some obstinate virus. Not because we smell like the Great Plains. No, it's because the incessant drip from our fissures reminds them that everyone suffers indignities of age. Let's compare those to the indignities of youth. We can look at our high school yearbook, assembled when everyone's shell was intact. Look at Joey with his carapace of stainless steel. Look at Susie snug in her generous spiral. Poor Alfie looks constrained by his clamshell, but he never had much social surface. Roger, our valedictorian, sports a chambered nautilus complex, which the rest of us tried but failed to emulate. And here we are with our sluggish but empowering snail-shapes. We thought they would retain their form, even without scheduled maintenance. We were wrong. Better put away the yearbook and get

out the mop and bucket. If we lose ourselves in ourselves, we can still make this place shine.

Tea Set Eliot

A slow afternoon in Boston. You balance a cup of Earl Grey on your knee and look askew. Yes, askew, not askance. I know my teatime talk. The British taught me to keep a stiff cup in hand, to pour without spilling, to don the cozy and dance about like a party animal. That's how they survived the blitz. Tea Set Eliot led the charge: a courageous if slightly antisemitic fellow who served as a fire warden. He extinguished many a fire by applying a dose of tea. Between bombings, he edited books written by grim conservatives with flocculent hair and thick flannels that stank in the underground in winter. But because of our advanced views, which exclude bigots of such pale demeanor, you and I can't discuss him. Instead of idly gossiping, I have advanced my views to the brim of the Atlantic. Peering over that brim, I detect a peerage wearing a feather in its cap. That must be the shore of England. I hadn't realized it was so near. When you finish your tea, we can wade across the pond to Cornwall and climb the cliffs and sprawl exhausted on the sod of the old homeland. More your old homeland than mine. Tea Set Eliot is long gone, but something he scrawled on a schoolyard wall still lingers. Don't you dare read it, at least not with both eyes.

Tony Rauch

and they pushed away their false myths
and were finally born unto god

I notice a group of fellow suburbanites pushing their lawnmowers across my lawn. I step to the window and listen as their wheels gently squeak – *squeak, squeak, squeak* – a rhythmic, breathy hush – plastic turning, metal rattling. Their lawnmowers are square hunks of plastic and metal, some gleaming bright and new, others rusty, noisy and old. I study my neighbors. They seem to be pushing their lawnmowers with contempt, as if pushing false illusions, pushing away bad thoughts, bad vibes, out-dated expectations. Several of them have not shaved in days.

I step outside as they pass, at first just watching, but soon find myself walking amongst them, initially out of child-like curiosity, but then basking in my own pride for them once their intentions are communicated to me.

They tell me they want to salvage their lives, grow to a new purity, evolve into something special, unique, and undiscovered, finally breaking free into a lifestyle not sold out of glossy magazines from people in tall glass office towers in feudal kingdoms far off. They make a strong case for renouncing society, for shedding its pretenses and empty illusions. I explained that today is the day we mow our lawns. They say today is the day they say no. And soon I find myself holding my head high, proud that we agree on something, that we can connect and share something real and untainted – that I belonged in this new land we were going to forge.

We walk under shadows and then into open sunlight, through the backs of expansive bright green lawns, under canopies of shade and then bright spots of sun, shadow and light, dark shadow and bright light, shadow and light, as we pass under tall trees and then back into open sunshine. We pass Bernie. Now Bernie, my dear fella, he sets his real low – like golf course level low. Yeah, you always had to wonder about a chap like that. Maybe it was the name, maybe that set him on the different path years ago and he could never find his way back. He went inside to call our wives. But we just continue on.

We're marching deliberately, walking to hide our lawnmowers, a bunch of us, this tribe in shiny nylon jogging suits, all colors and sizes. We are going to grow our grass out, as if growing out our hair in college. We are renouncing society's conventions. Tease and ridicule all you want. What have you ever done? Go on, tell us. Let's hear it. Watch my grass grow. Try and stop it. You can not. I know you'll try, at first with your mockery and then with brute force. But we've got plans for your ridicule, your brute force, for your illusions. We'll just ignore you. We've got better things to do. Go on, tell us what original thing you've ever done? Go vacation in a prison. Ask to volunteer at a morgue or funeral home. Death is beautiful – a place where we can all finally be complete

– a finality, a commonality we can all share evenly. A place where we can all be the same, where we can all be together, where we can all be free. Death is beautiful. As beautiful as my growing grass. We can think for ourselves now. We don't need any more crutches to lean on. Finally we have something in common to share - the grass, the long ragged, wild swaying grass – something that isn't an empty illusion, a lie – something that isn't confined, contrived, something finally wild and free, like out in the countryside, the way nature intended.

They go on to spread their doctrine of organic nature and purity, preaching to me as we *squeak squeak squeak* along our determined march of beauty and freedom. They explain that the world is devoid of reliable answers – only half answers, guesses, and false reflections – everything a deal. Grow your lawn, let freedom reign. Suddenly I want to paint my house black. Inside and out. A shining, enduring, "forever" kind of black. Let the grass glow. Let's get lost. Lost in our cool green world, the grass that we can share without limits or borders. We can use that time we wasted on our lawn care to lay in our hammocks and gaze up at the beautiful passing clouds, contemplating our spirits, like brave frontiersmen from a more pure era, fending off weekly bear attacks instead of complaining every time we break a shoelace – complaining about our coworkers, our roommates, our bosses, our significant others, our commutes, our tee times, our interest rates, our invisible numbers – whining, grumbling, gossiping, plotting, failing – cultivating a culture of complaint.

But then there is trouble. We can not decide on which path to take to ditch our lawnmowers. Some of us want to go this way, others think it's best to go that way. Pointing ensues. Factions form. "What difference does it make which way we go?" I cry, still pepped-up on the notion of casting off pretensions. "Let's just go!"

"We each must find our own place, our own way," one of the cooler heads counsels. "Our own way to hide our lawnmowers on our own terms. Our own place which is comfortable to each one of us. It's a personal thing after all."

"I'm tired. Will someone hide my lawn mower for me?"

"I'd like to turn back and go home."

"I want some ice cream."

"I want to go to the park."

"Come on, we're in this together."

"Are we all basically the same? Or are there subtle differences. Do we really have differences, or just subtle choices and manifestations."

"I'd say there are too many choices, so many temptations, so many ways to dump our mowers. I just can't decide. How will I know which way is best?"

"I have nothing to say, but look at me, look at me – I'm a politician. I enjoy complaining and pointing out flaws, blaming others. I'm talking, so I must be important."

"Our frailties and weaknesses will drive us apart!" I warn. Little did these brave pioneers realize that what they are, in effect, actually revolting against is the human condition itself. For here we are, marooned down here, confined in situations to which they have not been consulted. I think about bringing this angle to the surface, but then I reconsider, realizing this issue is a torment best left for another day. For today is a celebration, a ritual of action against inaction, a recalibration, a celebration of freedom. "We are together on a mission. Each of us to grow out our lawns, grow out our lives, to grow into beautiful mysterious jungles of freedom and color."

"Yeah, really. It doesn't matter who hides each lawnmower where. In the ravine. Down by the swamp. Over in the weeds up at the creek. Up behind the cemetery. Let's just do it and be done with it. That's the important thing – the end result – the abandoning of norms and shackles. Let the grass grow!"

"Hooray!" we all rejoice, for we all care. "Hooray!" And we each go off in our own direction to hide our lawnmower in manners of our own choosing. And our grass grows, and our hair grows, and we all feel a little less constrained, a little more relaxed, a little more original, a little more free.

Ryan Quinn Flanagan

Impish

No one smiles out the side of their mouth
except the air under an errant Frisbee
and this impish way I walk with gangly tombstone
feet dragging after me
so that mystery gravy truck stops
along screeching ghost-bound interstates
can catch someone else's breath in spotted
dreamcatcher windows
and this roadkill room I stay in
has this barking toilet off the chain
and an old black and white
that plays nothing but static
which is just what my clothes are filled with
after rolling around in this lumpy body lice bed
for the past week so that no one
would notice I was gone and here
or anywhere in between,
signed in under someone else's false teeth name
watching the dogs in the park across the street
squat down and soil their waiting brown
namesake.

Charitable Disorganizations

So what
if I saw a ravenous
pterodactyl's head in the
stymied black shower rug
this morning.

A man should be able to return
to as close to the source
as he can.

Not some collective parking lot memory,
this is my wheat to harvest alone.

Running sleepy hands through a tired brush cut.
My scattered thought army of charitable disorganizations.

Thick blue Rubber band callings, a moldy chessboard
donated to the Salvation Army with one rook
and three knights missing.

Snapped chain link fingers walking by.
Workday sleeves rolled up over cracking elbows.

Sadness is the weather brought indoors.

The sky falling in on itself
like a whole new way of raining.

Ian Ganassi

THE APPLES

Like dessert,
There was always room for embarrassment.

He was made to work the land, and he hated it,
Even though the fruit looked pretty in the pictures.

And formal dinners on Sunday.

Sophisticated in worldly things,
Contemptuous of those who aren't,

One false move and you're dead.

I was comfortable for a while,
But so much intervened along the way.

And the boys they like to be mean.

There's a storm coming in, batten the hatches.

The feral cat bolted.

These were methods of communication,
His face intent on the blackberries
Between the weeds.

At least we won't have to wade through the shambles.

Not to mention swim through them.

As per usual, she liked "regular" things.
Or things she took to be "regular"—
"Regular guys," for instance.

You take the donkey and I'll take the bay.

Humming an approximation of a show tune,
He liked the sound of his own shit.

The bicycle repairman was full of information—
The wrong kind of information.
So much for a day in country.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Cleverness for its own sake is a defense against feeling things directly.
We put out just after dawn, fishing for our dinners.
It's time for a review of the material at hand.
And if it's "too much information," go in ignorance.

It's always good to have a dog around
When you can't remember which town you're in.
And it's always good to have a clown around
When nobody knows where you've been.

Little Boy Blue come blow your horn.
We put out just after dawn, fishing for our dinners.
The sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn.
If that's "too much information," go in blissful ignorance.

A bunch of people with ridiculous names
Didn't remember which town they were in.
Other than that, I have nothing to say.
And nobody knows where I've been.

I could make up some names, but real names are stranger.
We put out just after dawn, fishing for our dinners.
Regardless of who's blowing the horn,
It's simply too much information: I prefer ignorance.

They were busy posing with their prose and prosing about their poses.
Why can't you remember which town you're in?
It is posed and it is posed—around here they tend to look about the same.
And nobody knows where you've been.

We didn't claim to be "fishers of men," but
We put out just after dawn anyway, fishing for our dinners.
We're just trying to get by.
If that's "too much information," go in blissful ignorance.

Which is quite an ambitious project, really, especially
When you can't remember which town you're in.
A good whack on the ass with a freshly caught swordfish will do the trick,
Or ask a neighbor—nobody knows where you've been.

AT THE SEAMS

High serious, the highly serious, a serious high;
Isn't that the name of some clouds I used to know?
But it's too late to be concerned or wonder why;

We're stuck in this tent together, pitched all out of time and tune,
Which isn't what we expected when we joined the show.
What sort of show? A picture show? I'm neither the usher nor the groom.

"Read the dictionary," the teacher said. And how "rightly" he was.
Sort of like "goodly" in the scene with Richard Roe.
It isn't everything he knows, it's everything he does.

Life is an amalgam, jerry-built and jury-rigged, quick and dirty,
Catch-as-catch-can. For instance the dehumidifier deciding to go
Into its beeping routine out of nowhere, like an insane bird.

Setting out to look for something and forgetting what it was,
You either can't or won't give me the blow-by-blow.
Something has to change, between know and does.

He was on the other line. I attempted to reach him
But I hit a brick wall. The race was touch and go;
The stakes or steaks were high—they overflowed the rim.

We receive stronger impressions through the senses than through words.
Words can tell you where the cheese is from and where to go;
But they can't accurately describe the aroma of the curds.

After the hospital I thought I was ready to go dancing, but I was wrong.
I hopped around a bit, like a mechanical raven or crow.
Unlike a raven I couldn't even approximate the song.

GTimothy Gordon

Fallout
. . . that sticks around.
-Joni Mitchell-

Darkness overwhelms all,
even indoors, especially *here*,
even with all locks turned,
bolted, panes shuttered & barred,
even with what's shadow, silent,
roiling back black at you *out there*.

Bard Mash-Up I
Fair is foul, and foul is fair . . . /
Macbeth I.1

Off this mortal coil!
out brief candle! damn'd spot!
slings and arrows . . .
flesh is heir to—
from Birnam Wood to Dunsinane
(*O! Let me not be mad, be mad, sweet heaven . . .*)
most outrageous fortune!
The rest . . . silence.

Bard Mash-Up II
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

Your Dark Prince, Sire, no Gentleman.
To whit: a lean and hungry look—
sharper than a serpent's tooth.
His Bitch-Queen queue board:
Another one bites the dust.
And another one gone, and another one …
even this hand, M' Lord, like yours,
all others, reeks of mortality.

Satori
05.05.2020
Satori seekers make me sick!
-Kakua-

Teen icon McQueen-Meursault-
Michael Furey-moments never come,
mid-life, *satori* search, mountain, monk,
zazen-koan-meds, AM/PM— all no-shows,
Buddha Birthday, Plague Year 2020,
housebound, on standby in the boonies,
à la Master Geppa, bygone, stifled by self,
I too implore amid all this carnage,
Where is my Buddha-mind?

Adam Fieled

The Witches of South Philadelphia

I.
If you ask the Devil she worships if he is
static or dynamic, a lightning bolt or a clod,
you'd be stunned to find him turning his
tools towards the erection of a greater God.
She's great with drinks, smokes, what's green.
Yet, as I was between engagements, how it was
I fell asleep I don't know. Her hands seemed
in the cake somehow, Carpenter Street laws
imposing three twists of her wrists, words
uttered backwards like a rogue monk might've
in 1311, ops number one with an arrow.
Birds
shot off the sill, mild November night, kinds of
confetti falling over me as the bloody corpse I was—

II.
"You don't question Mother Nature. What I have
between my legs is among the stars, out into space.
I carry Nature around and men can never really
know what Nature is. What I'm picking out of
the air now is who you are. So while we go through
these things, don't question, OK? Just understand
that what I'm doing is an expression of myself as
a Goddess, and as the Goddess I am."

III.
Dagger's flick into, under my skin, droplets
into the silver chalice, I could feel
myself almost swoon, fade into darkness.
She was quizzically writing a seal
onto parchment: here we stood, man & wife,
not forgetting what it meant that this
started in a classroom, for Christ's sake,
us opening our books onto Blake,
& the other she-devil laughs, sits
watching me too: two girls, two knives.

"Alright, cast the bloody circle, love, but
as you're off with your skirt please

remember to be gentle with your bit of
Nature, & don't be hard on my knees."
It moved in on us, her personal Devil,
lightning bolted our asses into greenness,
festooned the room with forwards noise;
she moved in on me, her Goddess-
assistant, licked clean powdered toys,
held onto me as magnet to metal.

5:30 am: I stepped out of the circle as she slept,
onto the balcony, darkness on Carpenter
conferring benediction, light as it crept
hitting me inwards, black turning lavender.
Taking up one of her notebooks, I
ripped out a sheet of paper, composed
a single stanza in terse couplets—
who the Goddess was, what she was
without a God, or with, in the drunkenness
of marriage to a man, & why.

IV.
So, through the Devil'd God, the she-Devil
Goddess prevailed into union with the poet.
What he learned in the South Philly flat: levels
of calm around good, evil, how to hold it.
The breakfast feast was more than waffles;
a green apple, cut open, exposed its raw life;
just as the sunrise exposed what was lawful:
she'd emerged, forwards, as my natural wife.

Gavin Lucky

from the CIA's *A Study of Assassination*

Persons who are morally squeamish should not attempt it.

Techniques employed will vary
the subject is unaware
concealment is immaterial

the contrived accident
falls into water

a private meeting
sudden, vigorous [excised]

care is required

if the subject's personal habits make it feasible
very exact timing is necessary.

an extreme measure

used in
assumed that it will
be ordered or authorized
in instances

reticence due to necessity
confined to an absolute minimum
of persons

Ideally
one person
No report

but usually
output is available
to all concerned.

Manual

the simplest tools
hammer, axe, wrench, screw driver, fire poker, kitchen knife, lamp stand
will suffice

to kill Trotsky an item of sporting goods succeeded.

Drugs

the subject has been using narcotics regularly
the subject drinks heavily
at the passing out stage

Edge

A certain minimum of
puncture wounds
the heart is protected and not always
easy to locate

wounds nearly always mortal
no longer true.

Conference Room Technique

Enters room quietly
Stands in doorway
first subject to react

empty

prevent individual dangerous reactions
back
corridor
corridor
re-enters room

Leaves.

Joseph Salvatore Aversano

SKETCHES OF SACRED ISLES

cliffs mist mists
mist mists

mists mist cliffs
mist cliffs

ϕ

cloth
tied

to
bare
branches

strip
by

strip
wishes

for
shade

ϕ

end
less
end
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less
end

Ron Riekki

The Girls on Tinder

don't call back and call back and don't and
they ask if I want kids and when I say yes
they say *not me* and when I say no
they say *how can you not want kids*?
and the mind games are the opposite
of being mindful, a sort of fjord into
the netherworld where I realize that
the bureaucracy of our jobs just leaks
into every aspect of our lives, where I
realize that this phone conversation is
a job interview and there are times where
we kiss and I never hear from them again
and where we fuck and I never hear from
them again and where we talk about God
and I never heard from them again and where
I never hear from them again and then I never
hear from them again and I wonder sometimes
if they were real, if anything is, if life is going
to keep being technology and nothing else,
just this endless mistaken falling into porn
when you were searching for something as simple
as a book on self-help, the cancer in everything,
in every interaction, how it's like being erased,
the extinction of families, the women I meet
who are hardworking and the men I meet
who are softworking and the ghosts I meet who
are sleepwalking and then gone, gone, again, so quick.

Again.

And again.

Gone.

Jesus.

I worked in a prison and so now an ex-friend thinks I was a prisoner

and I was because working in a prison is being a prisoner
and I was because a prisoner threw piss in my eyes and he
was the son of somebody and they'd make poison in there,
precise chemists, how they'd learn everything on the fly,
and there was a hell in there, the smell of feces, and all
these faces, lined up, glass cells, how none of it was like
anything I saw on TV, so much more violence, the countless
stabbings, how they'd stab themselves in order to get out of
their cells for a bit, in order to be touched, the absolute madness
of needing to be touched, even if it meant opening up their
insides to all of the sickness of the world, even if it meant worse,
much worse, septic, decompensating, seized. No, *much* worse.

We Make Minimum Wage on the Ambulance

so don't think we care and don't think
we're full and don't think we think when
it's 3 a.m. and the only food that's open
is the food that will diabetes the hell out
of you and you shouldn't call the ambulance
when you are a corpse, but they still do,
and we stand there, waiting for the coroner, or
performing the performance of CPR on the dead,
the worldview of being cadavered ourselves,
the sick kid, the steroid kid, the anorexic child,
how we are all children, all these drivers and EMTs
tucked into the fistfight that we call night, its billion
shadows, and we can't afford health insurance
ourselves and we work in healthcare, except 'care'
is a bit of a joke when you consider how we're all
standups, reenactments of scenes from The Joker,
a partner falling asleep driving the thing because
he was working eighty hours a week in order to afford
his new baby, because all babies are new, and all
ambulance companies make millions and we make
cents, and we can't piss, no time to piss, hold it in
until our bladders explode and it does happen too,

I've seen it, at car accidents, MVAs, vehicles
speeding, the windshields gone, the bodies treed,
the bladders broken like bad balloons, and it's called
PTSD, this life, this second, and the next and
it's called hunger and it's called the worst country
radio station in the world and it's called midnight
and it's called hell and it's called a uniform except
the pants are too short and the shirt is too tight and
the stethoscope is broken and the collarbone is broken
and the sphygmomanometer is broken and the neck
is broken and the patient turns to me and the spinal
cord is severed and we go to the next call and the next
call is one where we hit the wall backing up the ambulance
and the boss says they'll take it from our check and that will
take about fifty decades to pay that off so we just die slowly,
severely, slowly, severely, in slow-mo, our heads cut off for sport.

Tic for chic simile lovers

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Early February casual gig doldrums, late-morning
Western reverie as raindrops turn rivulets
trickling trickle-down economics
on the pane

Thought it was Josey Wales who said it
in *The Outlaw Josey Wales*
but he didn't—

Wales said: "To hell with them fellas. Buzzards
gotta eat same as worms." He said:
"Dying ain't much of
a livin, boy"—

It was John Vernon, said: "Don't piss
down my back & tell me
it's raining"—

Lynn Strongin

EACH ATOM molecule of love shines like dust, carpe diem, seize the day
Pinpoints of pain, hips, shoulders, neck fail me slowly. I climb the whorl-stairs slowly.
Anomymous Noel of Avignon
If constancy would fail me,
The leaves would fall from the tree
The birds from the sky
The Holland blue-green of your eye, love
Rich as Delft
Would dim away. This world so painterly, linseed giving gloss like glass and depth of history. I got girl wanting one boy. Aproned moved from room to room hope round as a dish. Pewter spoon-moon and bowl-sky. Linseed and turp incense burned sweetly. Windmills italicized Antwerp sky pearly gray.
Canals are veins
Like these from an IV in my arm.
The waterwheel of the heart is never grey but greeny-bay
Like the pupils of the little boy.
But he is in the painting so cannot bolt away.
Surgeon that I was all those years
Catching like melons, babies
Hull of life's ship and ribs I was faithful to God and family.
How in age hold you close to me
As I light the candle in the window, my spine curving into an S over the years. A neck collar could not help me.
That mystery disease polio had bitten me early.
Lace whorls like each codicil
With a dancer's ease
Telling the whole story page-by-page on straw-gold rain-bent vellum left like old love letters out the shed in February.
These knots like the canals, the hills, my own heart, red tiles and breadstone walls
When all else fails
Will not fail me.

AMERICANA

There's a movie being made on our street.
Goes without saying in color. A fellow's taking a smoke in the corner.
What's their dole per hour? Sky glowers. Coals redden somewhere.
They're powering up the generator, you can hear her hum, you can hear this baby hum
I lift a broken pencil
To write with the stub end. In composition mode, a heavy load. Some mother's son lifts cable bent
like a toad. I can't tell you how the rain lights up, a bulb. Whistle-stop Café.
A friend says I flow like the Mississippi river.
My nails just got painted plum-purple by my bather.
Now the unwashed light of the world rolls over us.
While Ben Britten's courtly dances play.
How this courtship founders while covered wagons troll west
The dying, the dead, the living.
When the paralyzed girl, five, was lifted, strong-armed up toward heaven out of her wheelchair,
it was a piece of work: she cried, she'd sat on a toy
It was story hour.
Let me tell you a story: cock your ears. Lean in
While Ohio hills start rolling
Bluegrass of Kentucky wave in the wind & the movie-makers go on in filmic light
Neon will glow: the young guy
his black shirt glows, a red dragon speared on it.
Death will spear us all down
Skylights bubble up catching winter glow of sun, it's spare chance in November.
I can spare you some if you ask sweetly
But, a hillbilly-kid I shot immies, I hop-scotched
Sweetly, it's sweet grass sponsoring American Roots & Folk Alley at Fork-Junction.
I never used a bee-bee gun, nor slingshot: but got what I got. I saw a boy get
his first hard on in jeans. He jammed gum. Twilight over the bayou, my lights went on.
Touched myself. Little sins of the Savannah haunted me with ghostly ice-blue eyes:
Death eyeballed me I could feel that gaze covering first my mind
Then my body, a radioactive blue veil giving off the radiation that would cause
my legs in a sterile room above the East river to die
Though a friend says I flow like the Mississippi.

READINESS

Winter of our loss is upon us: arise, vacuum out & wholly clean gutters,
Bag leaves,
Install showers in warehouses for front line workers,
Distribute masks to funeral homes.
These are rural places
On Wisconsin's western edge
Full of snow mobiles & trailers:
How can it get here?
We can slow this viral spread.
In the off chance. . .she dropped off body bags at morgues
Part of a warehouse is turned into a morgue.

Five death investigators to cover so many square miles.
If this is not enough
Rent a refrigerated truck to store even more bodies.

Batten down the hatches open up the heart: fasten storm windows & doors:
What I know is that my village stands outside my door, Dutch-doors & entrances opening:
One story down. Though we cannot get to the Greek Deli for dolmades & olives. Though we
have not hugged a grandmother in so long.
Bleached brick turn-of-century weathers sun. Cotswold gold almost.
We are the weather-watchers in lighthouses of hope: the way sun gets into all places
So must human touch
Tearing veils
Outreach of eyes
Blue, green, brown
Cleaning the arteries of hope, clogged, cleansing
The way new snow surprises, startles, even shellshocks in storm rebirth, one six-sided
crystal flakes by one-by-one.

ADORABLE BADNESS, you are a blessing
Stringbean
Unheard
Marginalized
I drop off for you a mitzvah, mother's sapphire ring, one stone missing:
the best kind of sapphire black-blue
The unchanging landscape is death
The ever-changing landscape of life
Touch thru quarantine
Paralyzed since the age of twelve
Here's the touchstone;
I see bears in yellow oilskin slickers
This recurring cancer is merely refrain:
The part of the burden you carry
The inside story
Invisible pain
Bedbound
Holding the poster for a horse, reined by a sheet.

Nightboat mine, I grieve, I mourn.
I also compose songs.

O the sky is tangerine over your loss.
My nightbed too.
I need you.
I tire of my daybed
terribly

The snow doesn't depict every one's bestiary:
But here is mine: the sound, the color of the bees.
Yes, too, there is failure
To stop cancer
To quit fear what kind of future will I have to die in?
But in adorable badness
Little you comes back to shove the adult out of here.
Bring me back to the jars of honey.

ANNO MIRABILIS (Miracle I)
Miracle of my old age the sky is green-jade
My soul is that brown hound in a Brueghel winter yard
Your skate key had icicles

Etched.
We wore each other's
on old strings around our necks at age nine.

Your leukemia has blood plateaued:
Renegade blood
winter ocean: steel to walk upon.Lyrical language to landscape
of north Holland

windmill arms
are
crucifixion.

After lightning-strikes,
a fuse
can lead to electrical burns.

Are faces of doctors provisionally grave?
Are children what the angels eat?
One minute something is missing, the next found.

We were not the generation who cut school
To flip thru
Poster displays.

You were a Pioneer
Who took your two children
North, close to Latvia. Folded to your breast.

Streetlights pulse
To heartbeats.
Silent steamrolled-out streets.

Do we re-film childhood? Life can an unconscious classic.
Would you let me know if there are burns after radiation?
The sky lowering for winter:

All your acts leave me with the

impression
Of silk.
Children with hair
Straw
Or milk.

Sky is jade green
A mongrel
Breath frozen barks in the Belgian yard. I whittle my soul.
A hard grip on the thing: your saga, near miracle 'Icarus Falling'.
Do you know that painting & my wish for you for falcon wings?

MIRACLE II
The miracle will not pool
But will become iced over
Like copper

A statue on the tundra
Arctic-heart
Frieze.

Who would take the gold life
Off an amulet,
Off your heart?
I stand back for better perspective,
Lensing the leniency of sorrow, the prism to the metal nearly
lacing the amulet on your breastbone: needed to go on living.

INDIGO BOAT afloat
I count hours pebbles thrown.
which dimple our pond.

In my bone body pains switch sides, bow low.
Traffic lights change. Knights & pawns dot the chess board of lame and running.
God the great director

Traffic-master
Conducts psalms:
Patchworked like the dales of Britain. O Elizah: Prayer and pain settle down.
Dust of
breathing, smoke rising. Our shadow-child draws knees to chin.

I hear Elizah slips a library book down
In the next room
its binding
    Lettered:
    Spine-to-feathers: another afternoon, lettered savior, sewn Pewter is the first lullaby, ivory the moon.

WALK IN SNOW forgetting, walk beside me holding hands
We can leave pages of our history behind,
glossy clay based and vellum. Inked ones. We can let oblivion with its skinny waterfalls fade. A fade-out film

Can forget the orange marbled cat, Marmalade
Where the glasses were left—was it by the sink or on the open book we were reading
Each other nearly half a century, sliding from our shoulders like a cape

My moxie, your long lens, your short lens,
Your wolverines which like the white-hot moment, the snow
Won't come

My occasional crying jags at paralysis
the phone book I sat on when I came home from the hospital and needed raising.
The phone booth in Albuquerque I phoned you from, high on pills for pain

High on buying a paperback, workshirt, frypan all for a fiver
This was the States, my homeland where a fast nickel beat a slow dime.
I rode the countryside like Nancy Drew in her red roadster, solved the mysteries of this life on earth

This strange before the year of the Plague.
Poor we ate well
Laughing over Retsina, plonk.

It is like the pain of a needle forgetting all things. Where the ginger was in the spice rack, its slot;
Not easy. Forget your heart medicine…me my wheelchair; we weren't born with

the old silver chair that took me thru life from age twelve
until all of a sudden at age eighty,
I lay down
Tortoise-shell glasses beside me
Oblivious of everything but the songbird beating at the winter widow, trying to get in.

IT'S TIME I GOT OVER YOU
Legs crossed-applesauce
I test my doctor's will of the right way

Time I released you
But the water
Would be a fire-hydrant drowning a whole street in Morrissey black. I can't give you back.
My doctor? She visits:

She puts her hands over her heart, crossed:
To see me cross-legged-on the bed typing
It's my office. Why should it hurt her heart?

The bull of patience charges at me
The bull-horned beast of tradition
The institution, the hospital gores her.

> If it's time I got over you, I have the moxie to hold on, on, Josie
> The mojo which allows no transition from workboots to great age,
> womanly poise: losing the whole diamond, the home run with skinned knees
> to the boys.

Mary Corbin

Chasing Feinman

I've been chasing Feinman since I was twenty-one. By that I mean beyond the man himself, the ideal of true love and all its promise.

I met Jakob Lee Feinman in 1979 when I was just nineteen and waiting tables at a neighborhood bar, The International. Two years older than me, Jake was pre-Med in his last year of school at Washington University in St. Louis when our paths crossed. It was all quite by chance, really. It saved my life. And, it sort of ruined it, too. Ruined me. For anyone else who came along after Feinman, that is.

Paulina, our bartender who was majoring in dance at the same college as Jake, introduced us. We loved working together and made a great team. One slow night at the bar, Paulina was schmoozing a threesome of young men at the far end of the bar. I was hanging out at the front of the room chatting with the band on their break between sets when she waved me over to the service station area of the bar where we waitresses would pick up our drinks.

"My friends from school are hanging out. Do you see the handsome guy in the middle in the gray sweatshirt?" she asked.

I glanced over, then looked back at her with a nod.

"He thinks you're really cute and wants me to get your phone number."

“OK, I guess. If he has your endorsement."

"He's phenomenal," she said with a smile as she slid a bar napkin across the bar, pulled a pen from her topknot and handed it to me.

At the other end of the bar then, Paulina leaned into her friend.

"See that waitress over there? She thinks you’re really cute and asked me to give you her phone number," she said, wagging the napkin with my scrawled digits on it before depositing it squarely in front of him.

I got a new four-top and sort of forgot about the whole thing. Just before midnight, I caught sight of Jake and his friends putting on their coats. I dropped an order off at the bar station and made haste to them. I touched Feinman on the arm.

“I just wanted to say ‘Hi’ before you leave."

He turned his whole body towards me, glancing down at my hand on his arm, which I removed promptly, realizing it had lingered there perhaps a bit too long. He looked up and into my soul at that moment with a warm smile and golden-brown eyes.

"I'm Jakob—or Jake—so good to meet you," he said, offering his hand.

I blushed, placing my hand into his warm palm. His friends by now were in their coats and edging towards the door. Jake stood and pulled on a wool cap.

"I’ve got to go — my ride. I'll give you a call. Maybe Sunday we can have a beer or something?"

I nodded and ran off to get my bar order.

The rest of the week passed inside my busy social life. I was getting ready for a surprise birthday party for the guy I was sort of dating for the past three months, Skizzy. He was seven years older than me and ran with a crowd he had known since grade school, guys that were dyed-in-the-wool South St. Louis boys of German descent, like so many in that town. They loved women, beer and the St. Louis Blues — the hockey team I mean, though the music style too. But mostly they were all disco and Motown, where that was concerned.

The party was set for Saturday night and my sister Annie and I were going as she was dating one of Skizzy's friends, Mike. Around nine o'clock, we got word that Skizzy was on his way. Lights were turned down and a giggly hush filled the room. Imagine my consternation when the door opened, the lights came on and everyone yelled surprise — but the surprise was actually on me. There stood Skizzy with a pretty blond on his arm, kissing him in excitement. I edged in close enough to hear some of the banter around him, enough to glean that the blond was Skizzy's real girlfriend, and everyone knew that but me. I searched the room for Annie, but she was nowhere in sight.

She and Mike had slipped away. She had the car keys and I had no cab fare so I was stuck for the duration. An endless night faded into black and the next thing I knew I was waking up to daybreak on a couch. My contact lenses were pasted to my eyeballs. I blinked rapidly to bring moisture to them and clarity to the situation. I was humiliated and hungover and miserable, wondering when I might finally get home. Annie appeared moments after that thought, coming down the staircase looking apologetic.

"Let's get out of here and get some breakfast at the Majestic. It's on me," she said.

Over strong coffee and greasy eggs, I suddenly remembered "Jakob—or Jake." Today was Sunday, the day we were supposed to go out. I told Annie all about it but felt doubtful it would even happen.

"How could I possibly go out with him anyway *after the night I just had*," I said.

The bill came and we headed home to our parent's house to sleep it all off.

. . .

I nearly missed Jake's call. Trapped in a dreamscape of delirium, I heard a voice calling out to me. It was Annie's voice. Urging me to wake up.

"Go away
. . ."

"No! Wake up. That guy — he called you. You have to get up now and call him back," Annie said.

"Who? What?"

Our older sister Katie had answered the phone and told him I wasn't home and she didn't know where I was or when I'd be back, scribbled down his phone number and hung up. Annie was coming to the rescue, putting the wheels in motion.

"Get up. Go call him back. Now!"

I stirred out of my slumber well enough to realize my eyes were supremely dry and my mouth even dryer and a sense of urgency was doubling back, waiting for me to catch up to it. Shaking off the grit and dismay of the night before, I took the piece of paper with the phone number on it from Annie's hand, sat up and stuck it in my back pocket. I paced around with an ugly gut and finally mustered up the courage to call.

"So. You have time tonight?" he asked.

. . .

That's how it all started. A near miss. That turned into a perfect love. After our first date, I felt like I had a chance at real happiness. I was walking on air. My senses had been awakened. New sights, new smells, new tastes erupted all around me. I was a newborn emerging from the darkened womb into a world I previously did not know existed.

"So, you finally met a guy that treats you right, huh?"

My older brother Donnie and I were in the kitchen putting scoops of ice cream onto slices of mom's peach pie the night my family met Jake for the first time.

"I was startin' to worry about ya, girl," Donnie added.

Back at the dinner table as we finished up the last of the coffee and dessert, Donnie couldn't help himself. He stared at Feinman.

"Thank you, man. You're the best thing that's ever happened to my sister. You wouldn't believe the cast of characters she usually dates!"

"Donnie, please! Don't pay any attention, Jake," I said.

Donnie turned his head swiftly to me.

"What? What did I do?"

Then turned back to Jake.

"No, really. I mean it," Donnie said. "I'm really glad you two met. That's all," he said, dropping the last forkful of pie into his mouth.

"I'm really glad, too," Feinman said, red in the face.

I snuck a glance in the direction of mom and saw her staring at me. She nodded her head almost imperceptibly in a kind of bridled yet cautionary agreement, then looked at Donnie as she stood.

"Help me clear the plates, Don?"

. . .

Our love blossomed over the next several months. We loved cooking together or going to our hole-in-the-wall pizza joint on Grand run by two Italian men who barely spoke English. We took walks through campus with his dog, Layla.

He liked my friends and the bar and the parts of the city he had never known before meeting me. We never had a single argument. If we appeared to be in slightest disagreement about something, Jake would say this one sentence.

"Let's have a glass of something."

He was a diplomat. A gentleman. A non-reactive Buddha. A sophisticate and a bon-vivant who saw no point in wasting time on being discontent. We had the same temperament and shared an ironic sense of humor. We loved the same books and movies, having fun in nature, playing with dogs, hanging out with friends. Not a beat was missed.

There was just one thing, though. But I'll get to that later.

. . .

Jake and I discovered we both had a brother in San Francisco and started planning a summer trip. Two days before we left it was my birthday and Jake and I sat in the backyard drinking cold mugs of beer. He went inside to get a couple more and returned with a small box.

"Happy Birthday, babe," he said.

I took the box from his hand.

"What's this, Jake?"

I pulled slowly at the little pink ribbon to untie it from the box, letting it fall into my lap as I slowly lifted off the top. I pulled apart the leaves of tissue to find a brilliant ruby stone, set into a gold heart shaped pendant with eleven small faux diamonds dotting the outline of the heart.

"Oh, my goodness, Jake! This is beautiful!" I said, looking up at his beaming face.

"You like it? I would have put twenty of those sparkly things on but it wouldn't fit so I told them to put eleven because it sounds like 'Lovin.' And 11 is like the two of us standing side by side."

He looked at me expectantly.

"But they did engrave the number *20* on the back. See?" he said, as he stepped

in closer and turned the pendant over in the box to reveal the etched number. Underneath *20*, in small script were the letters "RJF"— our combined initials with our shared J in the middle.

I pulled it from the box and asked him to clasp it around my neck and he did. I took the pendant into my hand and rubbed it softly.

"I love it, Jake, I just love it. And I love you."

I stood up then and gave him a kiss. We embraced for what seemed like eternity.

. . .

Everybody knows when you are a tourist in San Francisco. You're the one in shorts and a tank top in the middle of a fog belt wondering could it really be July. Mark Twain wasn't kidding when he said, *The coldest winter I ever spent was summer in San Francisco*. Truly.

We had two superb guides, my brother the musician and his brother the outdoorsman, and went to music and comedy clubs, world class beaches and hiking trails, fantastic restaurants and coffee houses and bakeries tucked away in cool neighborhoods. Jake's brother worked for an outdoor recreation outfitter and set us up with all the stuff we needed for the second leg of our trip, an ambitious plan to hitchhike and camp our way up the coast to Portland, Oregon and back. Our compatibility did not waver as we found our bliss together riding in the back of pick-up trucks, camping under dripping redwood trees and gazing out at windswept coastlines. We were floating along in a dream and over dinner our last night, Jake asked me to move in with him.

I think you know what my answer was.

. . .

About that necklace. I've worn it every day of my life. Putting it on with great care every morning and touching that ruby softly each time, I would ritually wonder the proverbial "what if" in the later years of my life. Because, you see, things didn't work out for Feinman and me.

Walking back to our apartment after getting ice cream, I turned to Jake.

"Ya know, all my friends really love you, Jake."

He smiled at me with his whole face.

"But. I feel. Well, I feel like your Jewish friends don't really like me as much as your non-Jewish friends," I continued. "Am I just imagining that?"

There was momentary silence as he fully absorbed the weight of my question.

"Hmmm. Well. I know it's . . . it's like this. Jewish people are 'The Chosen People.' I mean, we are a tribe, we see ourselves as special."

I didn't understand and asked if that meant I was not special. He stopped and turned to me, putting his hands on my shoulders.

"You are special, of course. *So* special," he said.

"But it's a whole big thing. It's like, we survived so much as a people and there is both a sense of pride and a responsibility to that," he explained.

It was then that he shared with me the remaining words his brother had spoken to him. He dropped the big reveal right there on the sidewalk. Two blocks from home. I could feel the beginning of an end as he spoke.

"My brother said if we carried on our relationship into a marriage, he would never speak to me again."

I was shocked and dismayed, my eyes started to well up, my heart pounded in my chest. Jake was my best friend wrapped up in a love beyond any definition I had ever thought possible. What was happening right now? I tried to weather the blow, but my emotional body was coming forward through my skin. Past bones and blood and soft tissue, right to the surface.

"What does that mean, exactly? What if we want to get married — I mean I'm not even thinking about . . . but what if we did want to . . ." I said, an ascending shrillness in my voice.

Feinman looked down at the ground.

"We can't."

He tried explaining further.

"It's not just my brother, my whole family – they *love* you – but. They would not approve of it and I have to do right by them. You see . . ."

I couldn’t see. I was incredulous. Mostly I was dizzy. Dumbfounded. Disconsolate. Blue. His words barely audible in the swirl of my swelling confusion and grief.

“What if I converted?” I offered, tears starting down my cheeks now.

“We can't. My family has told me that wouldn't be enough.

“Listen carefully,” he went on, holding my shoulders in both hands with the purest intention.

“I want to have a family and my children — have. to. be. Jewish. By blood.”

He looked down then looked up at me.

“So, we do things our own way,” I said.

He shook his head.

“That's just craziness,” he said in a hushed tone.

I was fully dissolving by now.

“I don't understand, isn't love all that matters? I've never felt like this before with anyone.”

What was this forbidden love? Maybe love is not all that matters.

Feinman grabbed my arm in his.

"Let's walk. We can talk about it when we get home."

Neither of us spoke the next two blocks to our apartment and I made a beeline to the bathroom when we got inside. I peed, blew my nose. I splashed some cold water on my face. When I emerged, Feinman was standing in the kitchen facing the bathroom door, waiting.

"Let's have a glass of something," he said.

I nodded and he grabbed a bottle of Chardonnay from the fridge and pulled two glasses off the shelf. That was one of his signature things to say, as I said.

Let's have a glass of something.

He liked to say it whenever something was in need of resolution. Or there was a need for a new look at a thing, a new angle. He'd utter it when receiving sad or happy news, to begin the planning of some new adventure or idea, and of course, it was also always uttered when it was time to celebrate.

But this was not a time for celebration. It was a time of mourning. At least for me. Surely, he had always known it would be this way and had anticipated this moment, this very conversation. He was prepared and I was not. He began to explain to me some basic tenets of his religion. I sat across from him at our kitchen table just staring into his face, listening with every fiber of my being.

"Having said all that, I feel the same as you, like this is a one true love that I never have felt before and may never know again," he said.

But it wasn't his decision. Decisions were made by and for the whole family — no, an entire *tribe* — to support an ethos, a tradition, a way of life that simply could not be violated. It would be like knowingly throwing water onto the eternal flame, but to me, the flame wasn't "my people." It was our love. Our once-in-a-lifetime-this-happens, monumentally grand, vibrantly awakened, sacred love. And his words were coming down on that flame in a slow but steady rain. I mean, what was this, Romeo and Juliette, for fuck's sake?

. . .

Then, it was a year later. Jake was in Chicago preparing for Med school. I sat at the bar after a long night of work sipping on a warm "glass of something" thinking about him. It was two in the morning and I was waiting for Marcie, my best friend who I was living with now in the apartment I had shared with Jake. I realized I was sitting on the very stool he was sitting on the night I first laid eyes on him, the night I had placed my hand inside his warm palm. An image of a trip to Chicago we had taken in the early days of our romance surfaced. That perfectly cool breeze that glides across you on a summer afternoon while driving around Lake Michigan. Windows rolled down, birds chirping, sun shining. Now. I was in the pentimento layer of a painting that was covered up. Sitting just beneath the surface of a newer, less defined, less exquisite rendering by the artist, trying to peek through to the light. Calling out to be found. Restored.

The next afternoon, Marcie and I were at her parent's house, sitting in the backyard post-brunch, her dog Muffin sitting in her lap.

“You seem somewhere else lately, what's up with you, lady?" Marci asked.

I nursed a cold can of Bud Lite, a squished-up lime wedge sitting on top.

Marcie knew me so well, like a sister. We had been best friends since we were twelve, knew everything about each other's thoughts and feelings. We shared everything with each other: intimate details about our "firsts" with guys, our dreams for getting out of St. Louis, our crappy day at work stories, our disappointments and our triumphs. We were as close as two girls can be. I had even dated her older brother Frank for three months in the tenth grade.

I shrugged my shoulders and looked at Muffin, so content, nowhere else she would rather be than in Marcie's lap.

"I'd like to be as happy as that Muffin dog there.”

“Well, it might help if you gave a little attention to your love life, girl,” Marcie said. “Did you ever see that guy who was so hot after you . . . what was his name, Johnny Sumpter? Frank's bowling buddy."

I stared off and dropped it just under my breath.

"Sumner. Joey Sumner. Nope," I said.

"Why the heck not,” she posed. “He's in awe of you. That's not a bad thing," Marcie said.

She grabbed the atomizer filled with ice water, spritzing her face with it. I drained the last of my beer and set down the empty can with a definitive finish.

"Well, Marcie, it's like this. I will never top Jake. He was the best I will ever have. My one true love. Anyone else is not worth my time."

Marcie listened without interrupting, a particular trait I loved in her then spoke with a puzzled look on her face.

"Jake? Who’s Jake?"

"I've got to pee," I said, ignoring her question, walking off towards the screened in porch and into the kitchen where her folks were playing a game of gin rummy at the table.

Iced tea in aqua colored melamine tumblers sat resting in a cold sweat. A sandbag ashtray filled with erect, filtered butts, the day's sports page and stacks of pennies littered the flowered vinyl kitchen tablecloth, a deck of cards holding court squarely at center. It was an image frozen in time for me, one I'd seen so many times before.

"Another beer, hon?" Marcie's mom offered without looking up, putting a cigarette up to her lips, eyes steady in concentration on her playing hand.

Marcie and I had both turned twenty-two that year but cold cans of anything brewed in St. Louis from her parent's basement fridge were sanctioned in their home since we were seniors in high school. This question played out as routine.

So, indeed. Who is Jake?

Maybe I invented him in a moment of desperation after Skizzy's surprise party. Was an idyllic romance born out of the haze and humiliation of that night? Had the past two years of my life really played out differently while I imagined a better life? What if Jake didn't even exist? Maybe he was just an invention from the deepest recesses of my heart and soul. I sat on Marcie's parent's toilet pondering the possibility of such a grand delusion.

I picked up the June issue of Glamour Magazine at my feet and leafed through it.

"Get Your Best Swimsuit Body in Three Weeks"

"The Ten Things Men Want to Hear"

"Dating Tips for Single Mothers"

Good grief. No wonder I'm delusional. What sort of paradigm are we trying to live up to, anyway?

. . .

I was ruined by Feinman, you know? I told you that at the beginning. It was like chasing cocaine. It's never going to be as good as that first hit, that first euphoric moment that you spend the rest of the night trying to recreate. And try as you might, you will fail. No, he was worse than that. He wasn't readily available in pure form anywhere and the alternatives were loathsome: either not potent enough or downright soul numbing. That is how it felt to date other men after

Jake, I'm not exaggerating. The years have passed, and sure, I have had several men in my life. I met a lot of guys at the bar and my friends were always trying to fix me up.

The closest I got to tying the knot was with Brian Mason. I was thirty-three then. Brian was my friend Joanie's cousin from Maplewood. She invited me to go to one of his adult league softball games one summer evening so we could meet. He was a handsome guy who kept in shape. He had thick brown hair and kind eyes, a good sense of humor and solid beer drinking skills. Brian hit a ball out of the park that night, knocking it clear over the heads of all the players who watched it sail by in disbelief as if it were a UFO.

We all went for pizza at Farotto's after the game and sitting at a booth together, Brian courted me over cold mugs of Pabst Blue Ribbon on tap. I found out that night that Brian was the middle child of three, had two sisters, Janie and Sarah, both married with kids. He worked in construction, right hand to the foreman, and did pretty well for himself. He had a black lab named Magic and a roommate who was an airline pilot who was rarely at home.

So, I kept an open mind and things went pretty well for a while. He told me he loved me three months into our relationship, on a rainy Sunday afternoon at his apartment. I was cleaning up the breakfast dishes, and he came up behind me and kissed my ear, whispering those three little words every woman wants to hear. I turned around to face him and just smiled and kissed him on the lips. It would take me longer to get there but I felt like I might. Brian was great and everything. He just wasn't Jakob Feinman.

Brian had big plans and he was just so happy I was part of it. Don't get me wrong, I loved him in my own way but it felt confining to me, a done deal, the end of the road. Somewhere on that road, I was sure, was a detour back to Feinman, if I could only find the right map. At this point, though, I really had no idea where Feinman was. In Chicago. Married. In private practice. That was all I had heard.

By the Fourth of July, it was over with Brian. It wasn't even dark yet as he walked me to my car, well before the big fireworks display. He wanted a real future, he explained. His faith and hope in me had completely fizzled out like a dud firecracker, with a little hiss and a pop, leaving barely a wisp of smoke.

After Brian, it was a series of failures and I couldn't allow myself to go through all that with yet another guy. I could be quite decisive, when it came to who was deserving of my time, therefore my life. If a guy made it miraculously past the six-month mark, I knew it was just a matter of days before I'd find a reason to end it. At age thirty-seven, I bought the bar. George, the longtime owner had

decided to retire and offered it to me and I had been there so long it felt like I owned the place anyway.

. . .

A guy walks into a bar

. . .

No. Wait. Let me start again. I'm sixty-four now and a stale joke is not the way to go with the end of this story. Or is it just the beginning? Time is a funny thing, ya know? Not always linear in our memories. I sold the bar three years ago, which gave me a nice nest egg. Right now? I'm on a train to New York City for a week as I do every June to visit old friends who once worked at The International in the 90s. The train is starting to slow down to a gentle, hypnotic pace. I'm lost in a distant reverie, feeling the words of the song playing in the air. Or is it just playing in my soul?

Dixie Chicks.

“Lullaby.”

You know it? There’s a part that goes, How long do you want to be loved? Is forever enough?

I get sort of lost in it.

The train has slowed to a stop now and I hear the conductor over the loudspeaker:

“Chicago, folks, Union Station. We'll be here for fifteen minutes.”

I'm sitting in the crowded bar car, fully immersed in a cheese plate and a glass of chardonnay, voices mingling around me. People are boarding, others gather up their things having reached their destination. A revolving door of lives in transition.

I hear a voice asking me a question.

"Is this seat taken?"

I look up and my eyes meet the face of a handsome man of my age, leaning in close to let others get by him in the aisle. My mouth is full of cracker and Havarti, so I nod and extend my hand towards the seat across from me. We begin to trade

small talk and I can see he doesn't want to just sit quietly, nodding off to the sound of the rails. He wants connection. He tells me all about his years of being a pediatrician. Married with four grown kids, divorced.

“She was never the right woman for me — only in theory, how my family wanted it. A girl from a good family, same background, you know — same values.”

I nod, silent but attentive, swallowing the last of my chardonnay.

“She always wanted to be a famous actress, but she gave up her career to raise the kids. She probably blames me for getting in the way of her dreams. Sometimes I think . . .”

He paused, staring off into space. Then he looked me right in the eye.

“You know what they say. You always wonder about the one that got away,” he said.

"Things seldom turn out how we expect them to,” I say to him.

I realize I am revealing very little about my own life to this stranger, speaking in generalities, dwelling safely in the gray area. Listening mostly. Content to receive. But something is resonating in his story. Something. Things shift in a split second, internally. Like being suddenly stirred awake from a deep sleep after a long night of drink. You know, *after the kind of night we've* all *had*.

My mouth is a bit dry. My eyes, too. I blink a few times, realizing just how supremely dry they are and my mouth even dryer and a sense of urgency is doubling back, waiting for me to catch up to it.

“It's a little warm,” I say.

I begin to remove my cardigan.

He reaches over to help with my sleeve. As I'm leaning forward to receive his assist, my ruby necklace swings forward a bit and catches the light. And his eye.

I sit back.

“That's a beautiful necklace,” he says.

I press my hand to the ruby, hold it in my palm for a few seconds as I’ve done a

million times before, then position it against my heart and tell him, *Yes, it is.* I tell him it was a gift from long ago. That I have worn it every day since the day I got it.

He nods.

“I bet someone who loves you very much gave it to you.”

He looks at it again.

“Is that a ruby?” he asks.

I tilt my head to the left.

"Yes. Yes, it is. Like my name. I'm Ruby,” I say, extending my hand to him realizing we hadn't yet exchanged names.

I blushed, placing my hand into his warm palm.

We were held in that moment in time, staring infinitely into each other, like God's thumb was pressing on a larger-than-life TV remote suspending us in freeze-frame. *Is this happening now or a fragment on a circular wheel of life? Block universe.*

“Let's have a glass of something,” he says.

I nod. He calls a waiter over and orders two glasses of champagne. We sat in silence then as we waited for the waiter to return. Not an awkward silence, mind you, but one that sort of blanketed us in a familiar comfort . . . Like a perfectly cool breeze that glides across you on a summer afternoon as you drive around Lake Michigan. I thought I could even hear birds chirping.

The champagne arrived and we lifted our glasses to each other.

“It's a good life,” he said.

I agreed.

Mount Tiresias U-Turn
(October 2020)

[*Nags Head, NC*]

second echo

legume ear luggage
let bot ort be thy toe

anchor's dozen

vale of tinctures
patriarchal zip
triumphant giant
ants in the par
king lot marginal
gangrene ellipsis

progress nearly riprap

gradual ziplock ceiling
kerosene of interruptions
non-particle covid carbon
footprinting in the sandrazors
valet parking corn on the cob
lingering eruptions
carbuncular sandtrap
laser cobbled

psittacine

bring yodel montane
this art other volume
controvertible ambergris
experience barking
at the torch to touch

by fume a repetitive
sea by boat

mephitic

nor centaur nor
stages of Detroit
the foul tale the
chamber cradle
theater of night
evenings decomposed
in equitable research
a yellow butterfly
perched on pinkish
lips ships psychic
slippage thrust to
rust a trust people
epople eopple provoked

madrepore

looms boasts most above
mud skin cane balaclava
persona embedded juice
and static comb tangram
dissected seven rethinks
moraine chuckwalla brings
toes by noon to the law of
the claw stinks like the news
like power & corrupted news

inverted solution

day acts through the
true thoughts general
tines dropped by paw
droop used tongues
dehydrated by familiar
expectations of reason

memoir talons canary

lore failed the student tale
obserts bristling cairn
holds a fearful teardrop
post-test claiming to
unarm unaimed array
both broths a burn returns
scent of coriander in
the corridors of the bold

taproot guts refusal

brazen forms isthmus
space orchid where
the vertebrates are
still vertical the
spherical spice the
visceral coax tech
coastal controls bane
into crypt cript slowly
misremembered barter

proximity two-pronged

kelp snout eye reasons
reap manage is net
sour gland sharppe
& lesser

mythic socialist workday

formal voltage therein intuitive
the blue wings
of the canteen order
sweeping up
around the trashcan
we are
carrots venom potlatch

since stands

quite next
for its parallel
moment
coined rose
inherent notion

Ongoing Research

Collage is a philosophy, not a technique.

[*Peaks of Otter campground*]

meter

meter meat metaphor
meat metaphor meter
metaphor meter meat
metaphor meat meter

metaphor

metaphor meteor meter meat
meteor meter meat metaphor
meter meat metaphor meteor
meat metaphor meteor meter
meat meter meteor metaphor

madrepore

madrepore metaphor meteor
metaphor meteor madrepore
meteor madrepore metaphor
meteor metaphor madrepore

meat

meat meet moat mete
meet moat mete meat
moat mete meat meet
mete meat meet moat
mete moat meet meat

manticore

manticore meteor madrepore
meteor madrepore manticore
madrepore manticore meteor
madrepore meteor manticore

mud

mud mid mod mood mop
mid mod mood mop mud
mod mood mop mud mid
mood mop mud mid mod
mop mud mid mod mood
mop mood mod mid mud

[*Peaks of Otter campground 2*]

far far

far fear fir for fur
fear fir for fur far
fir for fur far fear
for fur far fear fir
fur far fear fir for
fur for fir fear far

fact fact

fact feen fit forb furl
feen fit forb furl fact

fit forb furl fact feen
forb furl fact feen fit
furl fact feen fit forb
furl forb fit feen fact

bat burl

bat bean bird boon burn
bat bent bird boon burl
bait bet bind book burst
bane berm bin boot bum
ban bed bid boost burp
burn boon bird bean bat
burl boon bird bent bat
burst book bind bet bait
bum boot bin berm bane
burp boost bid bed ban

bag bug

bag beg big bog bug
bag bug beg bog big
bag big bug bog beg
big bog bag beg bug
bog beg big bug bag
beg bug bog bag big
bug bag beg big bog
bag big bug bog beg

[*Peaks of Otter campground 3*]

Ongoing Research

Asemic writing is polysemic, the opposite of itself.

Since the late 1990s asemic writing has concerned itself primarily with the definitions of prefixes.

the situation zone

verse annually cut
internally diagonal
neither ornate nor
an orange crate
the oral fire a form
of thumb piano
porous needs like
champagne and
communism

cut like a pie

vitamin bone romanticism
given verbal impressionism
expresso cubic yard sale
parsed the magical medicine
angels aglow with lucidity
a seed is a dare
watch the march of corn
oblong stories
with their predetermined dates

the saturation tone

curse annually cult
in terminal diagonal
either or note nor
a range rate change
crate abate strata
the aural fire a storm
of numb piano
pores seeds like
champ acne and
coma municipalism

hut like a die

vital minim clone

riven verbs ail
expressive rubric card
game parts edited
ed
it
ed
the mage medium
angles glow with ludic
creed is a snare
batch the parch of horn
job long storming
with their turpentine
gates

the matriculation cone

curse annually sawmill
in elastic lime
ether or rote norms
and castles rate change
crate made by strata
the aural hand a storm
of numb sea slip
ores screeds like
camping acres and
Mount Tiresias
U-turn

shut like an eye

viral elastic clone
sawmill verbs pill
Mount Tiresias
U-turn
same arts audited
awe
it
fed
the page podium
castles glow with ludic
creed made by a stare

snatch the starch of worn
stairs long stemming
with their turpentine sea
slipping gates with their
serpentine
sea gates slipping

shot like Andy

the glass lime eye
scorched the porch of worms
stairs lung ill oil
with their turpentine sea
pill awl with their
serpentine sea
pull caul gates seeping
sawmill rutabaga catgut
Mount Tiresias
U-turn
name smarts audible
claw
bid
blue Bible
the sage sodium
muscles flow with static
creep fades by a pair

the micturating comb

curls factual sawmill
inner clastic time
feather nor mote farms
the class mime eye
strata clade by zawn
the karst wand corm
of crumbs thee sleeping
doors screech like
vampire aces strand
Mount Tiresias
U-turn

[*South Point, Ohio*]

crave

cave unintended toe hand
anchor distilled
Mount Tiresias
U-turn
vast four by chorus
disproportionately healthy

carving

cave unintended toe participates
anchor distilled will comb Sunday
Mount Tiresias
U-turn
ed
it
ed
vast four by deciphering
10 minutes informational play

exclusion

elastic lime eye participates
big lies will comb Sunday
Mount Tiresias
U-turn
ed behind
it before
ed beyond
rolling needless day shift
origami pools to witness

chef kelp

elastic lime eye slow dawn
big lies will comb Sunday
Mount Tiresias

U-turn
ed behind castles
it made before
by hand ed beyond
wintry self-holding
forth example we
write 2020 twice

crafts worms

elastic lime eye slow dawn
pill pull awl pawn pule
Mount Tiresias
U-turn
rutabaga catgut
sawmill pond scum
forth slimes duckweed
bingo dialogue brings

misfitting

what ask
how
flips the
watery
act which
fair sharp
fending
off

field of thaw

visit teeth
ambergris
who brought
public cueball
the role of
the summer
as a thought
piano back

flips over
three wheels

30 Years Later, Melly Shum

what ask simmer
how soaring
flips the future
watery bacteria
act which senates
fair sharp slime
fending distorts
off nothing

still hates her job

Tuesday visit teeth
ambergris secretary
who cost of cholla
living brought lightning
public cueball solar
cross referenced
the role of pigs
peg the summer
as a thought
driveway right
handed piano
backflips over
much that
three wheels
process pus puts

When you go, your mind goes with you

1. Prove to yourself that you exist.
2. Find some things that exist and approve of their existence.
3. Existence does not think it needs to improve upon itself.

Ongoing Research

Asemic writing participates in the tradition of zerufe otiot, but not in the tradition of decorative expressionism.

Asemic writing is a spiritual discipline, not a course in the aesthetics of quasi-calligraphic drawing offered by your favorite art school.

Asemic writing is a kind of poetry. Unless you think poetry is a kind of visual art, you have no reason to think asemic writing is a kind of visual art.

[*Ferdinand, Indiana*]

the crucible fix

road and the 62 minutes
fontanel caramelized
cartwheels nor napalm
cooked fossil an even seven
with no normally
urgent eye

the delicate wind when

road and the here
fontanel
nation nor napalm
during fossil an even seven
with no kernel
of an eye

dinner and moss

5 books and the 62 minutes
ribbon snake
breakfast lime eyesore pill
in the valley of unwritten fossils
pledge butler
to the guru

the space toilet

5 voices by anthem by
them and the theorem
gusting decision among
awareness rooms
pandemic milk of mysterious
union of mouths adapting
breakfast & baggy loops
sawmill agenda the
beast diamond lime
bird lump key neck
pie gerrymandered gymnasts
eyesore in variable
bone gash the western
prepositions the mill pull mold
belt bale the tricarboxylic
acid cycle in the facial
database of unwritten fossils
pledge riddles the real
noetic virus to the guru

parachute anew

elemental voices by books and the
gusting decision 62 minutes
ribbon snake of mysterious
union breakfast sawmill
lime key pie
eyesore in the key of E
pill mull poll melt pale
in the temperature
of unwritten fossils
pledge butler the real
boa constrictor to the guru

debate in ketchup

same voices by tech and the
department decision 62 prevent
ribbon snake clear mysterious

union ground-up sawmill
lime bench pressed pie
eyesore saddled the key marks E
pill sunlit poll melt combative
in the ziplock
of unwritten fish
pledge butler Louisiana real
boa potato to the pot boils

metabolized architecture

same voices by tech and metabolized
department decision volumetric prevent
ribbon architectonic clear mysterious
Vishnu ground-up sawmill
lime kick pressed pie
eyesore saddled 1.3% key marks E
pill sunlit poll mourning combative
in the vital signs
of devastated fish
shallots butler fiery real
sandstorm to the naked brainstem

mud cumin vocable

wind a bent bean
air sortilege
you axle yawp
grown aspirin hat ingot
tooth-mirror
coin borders fallen
dawn mining
wrangles midnight

radial numen entropy

navigates wind a bent bean
air writes sortilege
you axle Frankenstein yawp
grown aspirin hat foraging ingot

engaggled tooth-mirror
coin outlining borders fallen
dawn mining scrutiny
wrangles mutinies midnight

horizontal bell-glass

navigates hexagonal a bent bean
outliving writes sortilege
greenery axle Frankenstein yawp
knotted aspirin hat foraging ingot
engaggled thistle-mirror
blooms purple outlining borders fallen
roadside mining scrutiny
voids mutinies gaps

dismantling circular pedagogy

navigates hexagonal a revised bean
outliving erased sortilege
greenery axle indoctrinates yawp
knotted ceremonies foraging ingot
itself selves thistle-mirror
blooms purple outlining psittacine
roadside basilisk scrutiny
bacterial twelve and soapsuds

[*Columbia, Missouri*]

moss phlox

twice music alive those so
a young jolt of amplified
poetry has a disposition to
disappear into the hands
of who is that dancing
the goose protector tap
prickly pear totem shaped
like the sharp handcrafted
absurdity absurd to traverse

he Fred one

official crisis our climate
one note these decades
should fire explain the
process with deadline
grassroots sapling
all week caves is open
to the sign of a cooler
warmth rising through
our corona like convex
mirror sun poems close

at importance move

center music alive those so
a train jolt of amplified
poetry has a mood to
disappear into the excerpts
of space is that dancing
the spice wing trap
prickly pear diablo shaped
like the sharp drainage
absurdity damaged in reverse

he Fred too

official 1.3% our climate
one note sock decades
should coasts explain the
tight light with deadline
phase transition sapling
all week caves benefit
open boiling backdrops
to the norm of a cooler
truth rising frameworks
our system like convex
will gathering histories

the grey utopian sun

center music alive those ten
effortless locations powdery
a train jolt of caul spleen
poetry has a mood knelt sun
to make sleepy headed verbs
disappear into the teeming
of space is that critiques
the spice wing concept
already across diablo believes
like the avid avocado coded
absurdity damaged how-steps

fit to fable a teacher

official 1.3% our fizzles
one note sock second
should coasts threads
tight light with Pigasus
phase transition cough
mind wanted to benefit
from waiting the sheen
to the norm of a wound
shimmers ritual lettering
length queried proximal
hide tongue fragilities

sun grey utopian

ten music alive those
powdery locations
spleen train jolt of caul
sun has a mood knelt
verbs make sleepy headed
teeming into the
critiques space is that
concept spice wing
believes diablo
coded avocado
how-steps damaged

teacher to a fable

fizzles 1.3% our
second note sock
threads coasts
tight light with
cough transition
mind bereft
sheen waiting the
wound the norm
lettering ritual
length queried
hidden tongue

Thinking

If A, and B, then C.

Also:

If A, B, C, D and E are considered from position X
they seem to be related to one another in Pattern 1.

If A, B, C, D, E and F are considered from position Y
they appear to be related to one another in Pattern 2.

If A, B, C, D and F are considered from position Z
they seem to be related to one another in Pattern 3.

musical morsel

morsel muscle morsel
muscle musical muscle
morsel mucus musical
muscle morsel morsel

crevice nor cheese

guessing
of triangulated

labels
discontinuous adverbs
floss the eyes
with cinema

preacher to a table

fizzles 1.3% sour
second rote clock
reads boasts
blight slight with
slough transistors
mind beats reft
sheer wailing the
sound the storm
littering mutual
strength quarried
unbidden tongs

not much

not enough 1.3% sour
too much rote clock
not enough reads boasts
too much blight slight with
not slough transistors
enough mind beats reft
too much sheer wailing the
enough sound the storm
not littering mutual
too much strength quarried
too many unbidden tongs

phlox

wild enough 1.3% sour
too blue rote clock
not enough creeping boasts
too much blight moss with
not slough phlox

enough mind wild reft
too much blue wailing the
creeping sound the storm
not moss mutual
too much phlox quarried
too many unbidden wild

corridor humidifier

wild enough 1.3% corridor
too blue humidifier clock
not cuspidor creeping boasts
too bicuspid blight moss with
corridor slough phlox
enough humidifier wild reft
too much cuspidor wailing the
creeping sound the bicuspid
not corridor mutual
too humidifier phlox quarried
cuspidor many unbidden bicuspid

zilch gulch

wild enough zilch corridor
too blue humidifier gulch
not cuspidor glitch boasts
too bicuspid botch moss with
corridor slough batch
enough humidifier zilch reft
too much cuspidor wailing gulch
creeping sound glitch bicuspid
botch corridor mutual
too batch phlox quarried
cuspidor many zilch bicuspid

dirt perks

shirks dirt zilch corridor
too blue perks shirt
not cuspidor shirks dirt

perks shirt botch moss with
corridor perks shirt
shirks dirt zilch reft
too much cuspidor perks shirt
perks shirt glitch bicuspid
botch shirks dirt
perks shirt phlox quarried
cuspidor many shirks dirt

nictitating claustrate

nictitating dirt zilch corridor
too claustrate perks shirt
not cuspidor nictitating dirt
perks shirt botch claustrate with
corridor perks claustrate
shirks dirt nictitating reft
too much claustrate perks shirt
nictitating shirt glitch bicuspid
botch claustrate dirt
perks shirt nictitating quarried
cuspidor many shirks claustrate

[*Columbia, Missouri*]

Constellate, to form or cause to form into a cluster or group; gather together.

To think is to revise.
Thinking is improvisational.
I think, therefore I constellate.

If I consider points A, B, C, D and E
from position X, they constellate as
Pattern 1.

If I consider points A, B, C, D and E
from position Y, they constellate as
Pattern 2.

If I consider points A, B, C, D and E
from position Z, they constellate as
Pattern 3.

[*Hays, Kansas*]

wil natior bu

many r more deg
manager reduction
in the eye
is vulnerable

overprinting molecules

after reticulospinal pathway
training in the stronger
muscles, the trees are steep
and the berries are red,
the moon flowed like a river,
burning minutes, the track
vulnerable, next and local

no climate

tracing
as history
comes
here is

leaning maps

I belong
to the backlit
transit for onions
is he question
my cooperation
already a
seasonal quality

when channels by autonomous

individuals in today's reinvent

dedicated world, setting the
worldlessness, its example
form individually neocolonialisms,
governing something, if there is
a limited becoming, another
new public world, technological
thought and sense, perhaps
an indissoluble psychological
feeling is a fragment
of human limitlessness,
an ocean for systems of memory

autonomous when channels

peptide in today's reinvent overt
vaccine world, setting the polite
space junk, its example sailed
colliding individually neocolonialisms,
micromanaged something, if there is
cognition limited becoming, another
savant public world, technological
satellite and sense, perhaps
grapple indissoluble psychological
culminates is a fragment
curriculum human limitlessness,
infrastructure ocean for systems
underestimate dismantle of memory

parallel to communication

peptide rebirth today's reinvent overt
vaccine duo, setting the polite
space junk, ritual example sailed
colliding durational neocolonialisms,
micromanaged modified, if there is
cognition radio becoming, another
savant molecular world, technological
satellite and lunar, perhaps
grapple whistling psychological
culminates shadow fragment
curriculum persona limitlessness,

infrastructure flooding systems
underestimate demolished memory

parallel

rebirth today's reinvent
duo, setting the
junk, ritual example
durational,
modified, if there
radio becoming,
molecular world,
and lunar,
whistling
shadow
persona,
flooding
demolished

sparsely parsed

woven today's reinvent
duo, setting zenith
zenith, ritual example
durational, woven,
woven flooding
demolished zenith
woven modified, if there
radio becoming zenith,
woven molecular world,
and lunar zenith,
zenith whistling
shadows woven

parsley sparked

woven is one reinvent
duo, is one zenith
zenith, is one example
durational, is one woven,

woven is one flooding
demolished is one zenith
woven is one, if there
radio is one zenith,
woven is one world,
and lunar is one zenith,
zenith is one whistling
shadows is one woven

[*Walsenberg, Colorado*]

whole lands are on fire

capitalism the chemical
outcomes in the night
extract the night extract
the outcomes coiled
fragments of radiation
depleted downwind

souls

akimbo
like a door
in a mirror
you can
feel the
spent cents
rolling
down your
driveway

much crucible mixed

a sparrow blood they
came from the center
one evening in winter
a spell the social
eye purple

fall, sit up, excited

eyeball caterpillars
our hands think
they filch
the chicken towels
hihs-hihe-hish
covert hovering
peers into
the piping was

I Was Thought

acoustic 6th been who
is was the co-lip 30th
fuzz the bean no zero

the library is hostage

late worm in a jar the
ex-moon reflects the
eyebroom who from
the moment to noon
a union against
numerous plans
materials in a bag
on Tantrum Mountain

Anthropocene

the road is eyes
- yes? the lake,
next marks, six.

what did i expect?

part of the score the
ghost, the dirt, the
asteroid, their

pebbles, planting
season, a catalyst
for spiders to thaw

again

land
for the coat
a ground raw
specters
slip

erupt the swerve

deviant aggregate anti aggregate
onions erupt per onions
the necessary logic of foraging
a swerve via constellations

via the swerve

aggregate deviant aggregate anti
onions onions erupt per
foraging the necessary logic of
constellations a swerve via

the necessary

via aggregate deviant
swerve aggregate anti
onions onions erupt
per anti constellations
foraging the necessary
logic of the necessary

deviant anti

deviant via aggregate

anti swerve aggregate
erupt onions onions
constellations per anti
necessary foraging the
necessary logic of the

logic erupt

the deviant via aggregate
of anti swerve aggregate
logic erupt onions onions
necessary constellations per
anti necessary foraging the

aggregate onions

aggregate the deviant via
aggregate of anti swerve
onions logic erupt onions
per necessary constellations
the anti necessary foraging
aggregate aggregate onions

foraging swerve

onions aggregate the deviant via
aggregate aggregate of anti swerve
aggregate onions logic erupt onions
per necessary constellations onions
the anti necessary foraging swerve

[*Bernalillo, New Mexico*]

fragile field three

we have groceries
alligator Matachines
civil tonic the
American louver

leveraged armies of
the brain talking
violets iridescent
memories like a box
hanging from a string

variable torment bulb

we have popular
alligator timeframe
civil continuity the
long slow louver
leveraged tremendum
of the climate talking
calico mail iridescent
memories like a nine
gingerly from a string

turning into milk

musics have popular
strange timeframe
foment continuity the
touch slow torch
infrared tremendum
release trash education
precious climate irresistible
calico mail wheat map
memories like a melody
gingerly from a portent

extracts preamble

musics chill popular
strange swollen frame
foment continuity in
touch working torch
infrared coaxing
access to traction
devastating climate

irresistible expanse
calico strayed
partial delve stunned
memories a melody
gingerly climbing
portent subjective
page biographic

delve sequence

why do you think
that was no normal
animal or animal
the iguana the fig
banana the figure
of the iguana or
a banana banana

enough

ripe postal juice if
fictions attribute
improbable plover
implosion the
utilitarian cheese
lottery derives its
capacity from the
cranium delta
operational grotto
primarily perching

provocations five

straddles the rim the
mistzone polkadot
camel & fire surge
escapes prefabricated
circles gasseous
quakes the past azure

twelve hence

or why or do you think or
iguana that was no normal
iguana animal or animal
the iguana the fig of the
banana the figure figure
a banana banana banana

since delves

banana or why or do you think or
banana iguana that was no normal
banana iguana animal or animal
banana the iguana the fig of the
banana banana the figure figure
a banana banana banana banana

but bat

bat bet bit bot but
bet bit bot but bat
bit bot but bat bet
bot but bat bet bit
but bat bet bit bot
but bot bit bet bat

homeoteleuton

bat pet bit dot but
bet pit bot cut bat
bit blot but bat bet
bot blurt bat bet bit
put hat bet bit bot
but hot bit bet flat

heterophemy

tapestries pet bit dot but

bet unseen bot cut bat
bit blot suburbs bat bet
bot blurt bat interior bit
put hat bet bit genre
multitudes hot bit bet flat

basilect

tapestries pet bit dot basilisk
bet unseen bot pampas bat
bit blot overarching bat bet
bot seminal bat interior bit
diaspora hat bet bit genre
multitudes rewriting bit bet flat

acrolect

tapestries mischief-making bit dot basilisk
bet unseen decades-old pampas bat
bit blot overarching mind-numbingly bet
bot seminal bat interior to and from
diaspora hat bet world-weary genre
multitudes rewriting tax-deductible bet flat

[*Holbrook, Arizona*]

democracy for supper

porcupine air dinner
managers the
paste dirt mist
catfish PM scripture
the original idea
in its original lake

froth warning

state of taken steak
already a fair-minded

ability to outrage
behind their recent
holiday, explod &
deploye, combarative
law-booth coins ago

signifier for supper

imagine air dinner
managers stylists
paste dirt ferried
island PM scripture
the crooked idea
in its crooked lake

serial warnings

remember taken steak
already a swimming
ability to broth
behind their gas station
admit, explod &
deploye, combarative
trouble visibly bedrock

presiding core

imagine air anthropocene
accrete stylists
paste talus ferried
island penny scripture
the crooked fire
in its crooked trout

surface & vanish

remember taken country
ensures swimming
built side of milk

behind their gas station
reality, rhetoric &
praxis, immediately
feet cellular peacock

[*Williams, Arizona*]

Jesus winter and glows

new soap we manger
fat baits my arch tomato
Jesus winter and glows
at the Sign O We Supreme
ditch inch eye was solo
wristwatch on a turtle
Jesus winter and glows

Jesus winter and rigged

new soap we circus
fat baits my unrepresentative tomato
Jesus potato and glows
danger Sign O We Supreme
ditch scissors eye was solo
wristwatch mirrors turtle
Jesus winter and rigged

hidden potato and glows

new soap paper circus
fat baits unknown unrepresentative tomato
hidden potato and glows
danger None O We Supreme
ditch scissors wrought was solo
wristwatch mirrors power
Jesus winter stucco rigged

pre-existing winter stucco rigged

new tent-fruit paper circus
fat materia unknown unrepresentative tomato
hidden potato and shovel
danger None O Work Supreme
shadowy scissors wrought was solo
crinkled mirrors power
pre-existing winter stucco rigged

hidden ravages and shovel

emergent tent-fruit paper circus
towel materia unknown unrepresentative tomato
hidden ravages and shovel
danger None O Work Interstellar
shadowy scissors wrought was penguin
crinkled mirrors coastal wolf
earth masked wonder unfortunately genuine

earth masked wonder systemic soup

emergent pandemic paper circus
towel materia unknown interface tomato
hidden portal and parachute
danger None Hypnosis Work Interstellar
mise-en-scène was penguin
crinkled skyrockets coastal wolf
earth masked wonder systemic soup

sneeze forth porch to Linda

new soap we micromanage
fate baits my arch tomato
sneeze forth porch to Linda
at the Sign O We Accelerating
ditch inch eye wash solo
wristwatch ontological turtle
sneeze forth porch to Linda

needs too gulch to grow

half soap we micromanage
fate baits my limp tomato
sneeze forth porch to Linda
knees too gulch to glow
at the Moth O Octopus Accelerating
ditch coexists aftermath solo
wristwatch non-behaviorist turtle
sneeze forth porch to Linda
needs too gulch to grow

needs too gulch to grow

half sightlines we micromanage
storyboard baits my limp tomato
seize front porch from Linda
kneads tooth gulps to swallow
at the Translucent Octopus Ethereal
campus texts spur final heat
humanist sailor anthill all turtles
seize front porch for Linda
creeds tool mulch to grow

feeds loop gulp the snow

half sightlines we decipher
fungal baits my limp tomato
seize Fort Porsche for Linda
sheets dawn Wanda no
at the pathogen droplets equal
viral nests spur spinal meat
crux unflinching turtles
squeeze forked torch for Linda
seeds pool touch to go

audience cause by five

half turnip we defibrillate
nostrum docent my limp tomato

Sheena Deems punk believer
Steve dawns Wanda know
at the milliner droplets equal
salt scepter spinal ballot
aperture lava nozzle
baked my harp to Cleveland
rancid lawnmower former void

timeless cause by five

original turnip we defibrillate
yardsale helicopter shopping
Sheena preens punk believer
stove pawns Wanda know
enough milliner droplets equal
salt scepter catnip ballot
subconscious data fuel
raked my carp to Cleveland
phosphene Tuesday map

timeless mobilized by five

original turnip chips defibrillate
yardsale helicopter helix scale
Sheena dreams punk delivered
clove lawns Wanda crow
enough milliner fuzzy equal
corona salt scepter blanket
machine shard portable soccer
faked F-sharp to Cleveland
arterial pasta shake

timeless mobilized five aura

defibrillate turnip chips
scale helicopter helix
Sheena dreams punk
delivered clove lawns
Wanda crow equal
enough milliner fuzzy

blanket salt scepter
soccer shard portable
faked F-sharp to
Cleveland arterial
pasta snake

hypnagogic quincunx

three fives = 6
six fives = 3
5 = 6
2 triangles in a square = 5 = 6
= 4 triangles = 3

times mobile five

chips defibrillate turnip
helix scale helicopter
punk Sheena dreams
lawns delivered clove
equal Wanda crow
fuzzy enough milliner
scepter blanket salt
portable soccer shard
to faked F-sharp
arterial Cleveland
snake pasta

[*Pahrump, Nevada*]

it it ed

ed ed
it

ed
it it
ed

ed ed ed

it
ed ed

southern tip of the hour

our mops and chants
bitter than feathers
broken barn noun
ceases letters dance
their passion

little chicken land road

butterflies once formal
today like anything else
setting upon
the fork of the eight
you can you see
they are
the magic water
a species of mopping
ladders stacked against us

On My Ballot

Eros sees
Through the roof and the
Wall
Thanatos play dough is
Not really hopping
There
In his sweatpants
With the grunt mope
And soup
Hi, surprise
You thought there would
Be more
You never know
Big enough to improve

[*San Simeon, California*]

quarterly reading

not vitamin church
beckons the 80th
adamant / neither
immutable
alphabetical certainty
nor the stomach
and the sword
read aloud / shoes
herring pretense

biological sea

departed hormones
maps and sharps
building material fish
away from the "experimental
ladder" wire moles seeing
for the first time the
abandoned lotus the
barbed wine micro-realities
here in the hostile barracks
of the dictionary

the teeming deems

moth stairs garnish
the petty innovations
of deciduous graphemes
frantic ore once
on the chin the shin

sixteen fires

cubic candles traditional
cranial objectivity each
poached particle

a probable inkling of an
eye / no one assumes
the purpose of their
clothing in public work
/ today, why not connect
the partition to the roof
and the roof to the ceiling
/ between these small,
morbid layers, marathons
glitch coffins, remnants we
recall only by decoding
their songs

bent totality

one before the
state of avid
penumbral semblance
connives / intention
conserves its
anchors / the letter
of the apple

seven months

paper internally
schizogenic
ascribed to the
cold call rendezvous
a piano without
socks / north of
the number 5,
provisional unrest,
inserted and ate
the pronouns

spider web, open

hair to the glass the
floor hidden deeply

through which no
iterations have come
to pass this year
inside the same
artificial immersion
container

no counties

bac examina pur arc
portfolic
resou conjun to p

confine

bet sleek display
the second for
how are oblong

urban trash

N3 song view
who architects
around the
peanut
wider between
cities across
the scissors

changing often

egg periscope the
burnt sun know
fork higher is less

hands-on

to form a suit

from a soup
to agree to inkblots
and dealing from
the bottom of
the deck
to inchworm or
not to lunchroom
boundaries invite
playful variations

The Put, and
The Unput

surges the
raveling band
of Selves
dealing inkblots
from the bottom
of the soup

find them

a movie
tied themselves
to silence
to agree to
an unraveling
brand of
Selves

days, also nothing

out of a perceived
need for a post
corona environment
Selves silence
themselves from
the bottom of
their boundaries

In Nevada

in Nevada but
not only in
Nevada there
are picnics &
pianos, even
when we are
no longer in
Nevada

still left to come

left behind the skies
are clear and the
stakes while Joe
hope to dust their
bungled worse, the
fundamental negations
are dishonest and
unfortunate, right now
and for months to come

yet highly cyclical

realize one out of
denuded vocals
within the screams
of empire there
are and earlier were
improvised naked
noises behemoth
hat crocodile not
your ashen baseball
how can one
decide based only
on human emotions

the sands

achieve
your bemind
to creatine
the sans
influx

unknown guts

wake up
in a state
of unsung
discontinuity

everybody

vegetables make use
of the profane air
across time begins in
your different body

six gusts of purview

loss of spiral memories
a moment of grids
which deploy
the grip
not only why
rappel the open water

waving from my canoe

electric foaming this
and Joe Urgency
the cloths are supple
a sliver of eggs
hangs upside down
against the warmth

of a shifting galaxy

the sun-marks

monsters partly visitation
and yet they are
present in the writing
stuffed with shoes
in the pattern of November
sap slips by the seconds
slap nor slop away

Joe His Environmental Interior

and hide your toes
in the last Millennium
milk pennies resume
and count the
climate piano nature
for nothing
sunset
breath
organs under shock

trance eyebrows

compression socks
can be site-specific
they enable the
rancid earth
counting
crammed magic
distant
and compressed
two feel away
from the locally
grown dirt

webbed sycamore

quartets opening
an eye quail
arbitrary videos
unto himself
Sunday Ed and
21st Century Joe
by their puppets
in the snow shall
we know them
by themselves

a slouch of ants

insects no illusion
of moot cows
milking the clock
loosely based
on anthropomorphic
islands and atolls
dark wheat without
bacon one nose
in the air
and two trees
in the ground

Henry Spirit

Henry Spirit of Empoclyon de Mike.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon d'Mike.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon dMike.

Henry Spirit of Empoclyon de Don.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon d'Don.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon dDon.

Henry Spirit of Empoclyon de Frank.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon d'Frank.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon dFrank.

Henry Spirit of Empoclyon de Fred.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon d'Fred.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon dFred.

Henry Spirit of Empoclyon de Hank.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon d'Hank.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon dHank.

Henry Spirit of Empoclyon de Karl.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon d'Karl.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon dKarl.

Henry Spirit of Empoclyon de Larry.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon d'Larry.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon dLarry.

Henry Spirit of Empoclyon de Non.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon d'Non.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon dNon.

Henry Spirit of Empoclyon de Paul.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon d'Paul.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon dPaul.

Henry Spirit of Empoclyon de Rusty.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon d'Rusty.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon dRusty.

Henry Spirit of Empoclyon de Dustin.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon d'Dustin.
Henry Spirit of Empoclyon dDustin.

He Is Right

I am in a phone booth, being watched by Albert Camus. I know what he is thinking.

anxiety

spoon mechanic
pixel nexus

flexible carrots
cannot
cannot
classroom moon
olfactory
robotic
forgiveness

unusually

minimum spoon mechanic
pixel immersed nexus
flexible intimate carrots
cannot local
cannot multiple
classroom threatened moon
olfactory identify
robotic unflinching
forgiveness empirical

outcome

minimum biopolitical mechanic
pixel immersed climate
flexible intimate facade
cannot dance local
cannot anthropic multiple
classroom flying moon
olfactory mammals identify
robotic splitter unflinching
forgiveness empirical
adventurers

anticipated

minimum biopolitical anticipated
voted immersed climate
flexible post-facade
candidate dance local
falling anthropic multiple

transform flying moon
determine mammals identify
rugged splitter unflinching
various empirical
stories

footprints

muddy biopolitical anticipated
voted fields climate
flexible post-diversify
candidate sessions local
falling translocal multiple
transform flying expressly
determine mammals summer
rugged splitter simmering
various work to do
stories cast pandemic

no trash

muddy oasis anticipated
hedge fields climate
flexible sludge diversify
rotting sessions local
ratings translocal multiple
rainstorms flying expressly
landfills mammals summer
waterproof October simmering
rake and ferret election
bleeding electric pandemic

skirmishes

muddy oasis scattered
hedge fields flipped
flexible sludge clipped
rotting sessions slippage
ratings thanks Hawaii
rainstorms marking outreach

landfills cougars courage
waterproof ripples crumple
rake and ferret wait
a few hours haunting blue
moonlight bleeding electric
plants stark roar exactly

millions next

even hoax oasis scattered
on the rabbit fields flipped
these facemasks sludge clipped
required tequila sessions slippage
on Tuesday Coulee thanks Hawaii
rebar radar rotary marking outreach
cringe eggs screech cougars courage
the rest resist ripples crumple
rake cakewalk and ferret beret wait
it but has Americans exercised
cycle cast sacred haunting blue
moonlight futures furniture
across the flaming piano

shapely barriers

even clamor oasis scattered
on the clam fields flipped
these clamps sludge clipped
required lamp sessions slippage
on Tuesday limp thanks Hawaii
rebar radar clumps marking outreach
cringe eggs screech lumpy courage
the camp sample ripples crumple
the simple amperes await
perilous Americans exercised
cycle cast pearls haunting blue
swirling futures furniture
across the twirled potato

From An October Notebook

How the oblique
gate of the
self rules the
cage of the
page

How the conduit
of writing opens
the oblique gate
of the page

How the liminal
mist of the
self resuscitates
the naked page
during the hour
in which we
choose to sing

knit paper fork
church turtle lurch for lunch
curse of the open text
alligator to a piano
the angels of interpretation
a skim of sage
hymn of the yellow gym
orthodox grotto forehead
the mule-gauge as teeth

The oblique gate
is in fact less
oblique than it
appears.
The declarative
sentence sounds
like a statement
of objective fact.

Asemic
Be semic
See semic

The declarative
sentence looks
like a statement
of objective fact.

Asyntactic
Be semiotic
Sea sea rider
desemanticized

asylum mulch

explox
impoxximate
ratio
where the
students
are eggs
gluten-free
and luteous
impoxx
impoxx

much of asylum

explox lens
impoxximate 1974
ratio to episode
fracking or
river deer
are pep rallies
frenzy nights
drive harms
impoxx sense
impoxx aspirin

ex-diplo well

bird redacted lens

gambit dust 1974
alien beans
subjectivities or
immediate
Social Detroit
weekends of
our many
corners else
wondering elapse

socks with towels

gravitational bird redacted lens
gambit 4-legged dust 1974
alien beans widespread
subjectivities skies or fossils
immediate agile socks
Social virus Detroit vastly
weekends of cosmic
sensitivity our many
collisions corners else
neuroscience wondering elapse

process before November

crazy islands vote their
sentences make disbelonging
foamy sun / making a second
tea, a second team / the,
the young bleed crises
upon their heads of state

diameter two halts

nominal cancerous conditions
middle pandemic normalcy,
salty use less hinges / medium
cheese entitled to a presence

reminds a soggy onion

umbrella venerated romanticist
sneeze hands half sun / time
and time again, against the
exrequirements of everyone
is a desert unto their proven risk

feral campfires drainage

held islands vote their
sentences drain disbelonging
foamy sun / lobbyists a second
tea, a second corporate/ the,
the businesses bleed crises
upon their end of the various

reproach and prolific

doubling-down cancerous conditions
six-figure pandemic normalcy,
salty use less swing states / medium
cheese entitled to get out the vote

trade abstract ten walk

umbrella venerated indestructible
origin hands half sun / time
egg-shaped again, against the
eyes cringe cracked everyone
is a desert more than ever unseen

that do to be

held damages vote their
vacant drain disbelonging
foamy sun / fuzzy broom &
tea, a second spectrum notes
the businesses caulk mad

distill and acclaim the growl

improvised horse & legacy

octopus mushrooming conditions
tune the lights pandemic normalcy,
salty soap notable swing states
delve errant combats chosen dissect

surfiction stomping drum

umbrella foamy indestructible
origin hands half sun / botch
winter limits worse against the
new waving sulfur everyone
has destructive transit legume

Karl Bachmann

GALACTIC PUNK W/ A PISTOL ARM

"My colleagues & I wanted to know
The TRUTH
(Of this world) the here & now & is.
Be it a truth known in the body, or
Mind or in some spiritual pavilion."

I wait for no one. - Have you typed
Your letters accurately Clerk? That
Is who you are (among other things
Not simply what
You've done). But to explain it all…

Would be too much! & no one has
Time to waste on such dissertations.
This poem—was written in Harbin
China (under the guidance of THE

Russian Church)! There's a golden
River that subsumes all delusion…
I laze in emerald nodes & byways
"But tell us the truth, was it you?"

[I'll be your ally…]

I'll be your ally M. Eluard as
a sun wanders thru
the sea. We could
ask Tiffany out for
lunch,
or ice cream at noon.

& her childlike whims!
Do you take note as
she floats w/ grace?
In the verisimilitude
of a rose she's pure
of heart, & gorgeous.
When
galaxies sink down
upon vast horizons,

I'll be your ally M. &
one day, we'll join
forces
to find out—what's
required to please
a lovely girl (before
mercurial moons).
She'd rather fight,
or die than have to explain a thing!

Dennis Hinrichsen

[ANASAZI LOVE SONG] [W/GLEN CAMPBELL]

Galveston, oh Galveston
I am so afraid of dying

—O pristine city of the brain // water rising
along the Texas coast // when I am no longer shore enough for you
to keep loving me & I can't // or won't // now anger licking clean its
plate // a name forgotten // wife // daughter // even the beloved dog
who hunkered against my leg for warmth because she was hurt
that time in California when I was young & Erin was cooking &
Sophie's feet were sore from all the hiking & so she was rubbing them
hard // both hands // & we were drinking beers & letting the television
run // that last place they lived in Oakland I'm pretty sure // West
Street // just down from Montgomery BART // all this *remembering*
just me exiting right before your eyes // last train // last trick //
a prestige // *—O Galveston dear Galveston* please grant me one last song
to play until the Southwest is cathedral in my eyes again & my
wife can see // too // what I am dreaming—that day at Chaco // Pueblo
Bonito // when we leaned against the inner walls & let the tourists pass
like some tech-savvy tribe // tour bus idling // covered w/dust & next
world elsewhere // until they were gone & we were still alive //
inside our bodies // these ruins // & desert wind alone was our music

[BOX OF LIGHT W/MICHAEL WINTERBOTTOM IN IT]
or [*limitless icy wastes*]
[THIS DESIRE FROM THE LATIN WE CALL *libido*]

> *Show rock concert, show sex, show icy wastes of Antarctica. Repeat eight times. That's essentially the structure of Michael Winterbottom's* 9 Songs, *a movie that marks an important director's attempt to deal with explicit sex.*
> "Songs Doesn't Score," Roger Ebert

—won't see love like this anytime soon // not really backlit but still a fin of loveliness there // radio on // high in the dark // soft notes // old jazz // but not really listened to // it was concentration // pooling // we were after // stratas of ice & melting // minimal —yes—but *mouth* // monotonous—yes // but *tongue* // our conversation wisps of fingertips & breathing // I'd revealed secrets // there was a sash // I expected she would not keep them // the infinitesimally subtle betrayals happening elsewhere // in rooms less white so there was always then // at least // illusions of honesty // in another world less Mediterranean with sunlight // —O *limitless icy wastes* // you are byproduct now // part memory & dying // little cuts of time that are me fast forwarding to naked bodies writhing

[*psalm* #27] [W/GODZILLA IN IT & MY IPHONE & A SUPERBUG]

—O gon-*uh*-**ree**-*uh* I can spell you now

you are a burn again in a man in England you are so keen
to live as does this newsfeed desiring to be *my* virus //
I think both of you infect me now // I have to put my phone
down to *cure* a little package of time // put my poem
down // but still the idea infects the brain // —O gonorrhea
you hack your self to hack the body // you plagiarize & collage
another bacteria's resistant codes // you will be Godzilla soon //
you will be MRSA // because that's the form our savior
takes—a little cleansing first & then a body count // that's how
my mother counted all the way to 1 // that residual wetness
that was her last living breathing so imbued w/resistance
I barely touched her so afraid of contagion // & then that lizard
face—I thought you were our friend—bending down to melt
all the brittle rods & cones—those dying eyes—w/atomic breath

[WHAT HAPPENED IS THIS] [I GOT OLD] [I GOT SENTIMENTAL]

—what happened is this // I got old //
I got sentimental // I fell in love with everything //
EXAMPLE—James Booker—the Bayou Maharajah—
that was easy // EXAMPLE—Jerry Lewis—that was hard //
but it was spring & there was big noise in the yard
& so I said *yes* // many times *yes* // *yes*
to that cascade of notes—to Vitalis-slicked hair //
manicured nails // I preferred the chandelier
in the brain but most days I was just a 60 watt bulb
w/face & eyes // if I got my hands on a dog
when I was out for a walk—*great*—
or heard a red-winged blackbird down by the river
(they are suddenly just *here* // they weren't last year)—
or maybe I just watched two or three minutes
of a kid's first bicycle ride // yeah // that's what love is //
a tense wobbly ride over busted concrete //
helmet like a piece of outer space // until you crash //
yeah // love crashes // but you get back up //
tighten that strap & power down the sidewalk // streamers
flying // legs churning that impossibly easy gear
twice the speed of the wheels // pedals the color of popsicles

Nina Živančević

The EYE

(*For my Louise Landes Levi*)

Perhaps ive seen too many things that i was not supposed to see
Why would that "first" Eye go so bad?
The third one was cured by Guru Jee in London in 2005,
that was when i saw you, David, Poyata

YOU had those heart shaped glasses ...
That's one thing i learned from YOU
/ that the sight is in the shape of a heart
We should see
with our heart, fingers, and
not with the eyes of the "real,"
A flaky illusion for us all

Who knows if we were really supposed to meet in music.. .
And the festival of vanity
Goes on and on ..

It's good you told me
" i don't need to hear any people
Tell me about India"

It's good i closed my eyes to
see you better just this time

Paris is burning

Paris is burning
The buildings are in flames
kids, cars, faces— shame on color
Shame on white shame on black shame
Everyone is burning with shame
Let me tell you mother, why
Paris is burning, says he,
Let me tell you mother why Paris
Is burning— the police have set children
On fire, the police have set children on fire as
These were tired of social injustice
As they were sick with social injustice
Let me tell you mother why Paris is burning— the police
Have set black kids on fire and they turned red, they turned gray
They turned to burnt flesh
Just because they are black
Let me tell you why Paris is burning,
Nothing bad will happen to me, mother
As I am white, and yet
I understand why Paris is burning,
Kids, buildings, cars and faces
Burning with shame…

(c. 2005)

Now you see it- now you don't see it (a true account of Gregory Corso)

Once I met Gregory in Boulder, Colorado,
showed him my translations of his poetry which he found
  beautiful and wanted to try my Taurus ring on,
Now you see it— now you don't see it, he said.
It took Ginsberg two months to return my ring from him.
Once I met Gregory in NYC after my incredible marijuana arrest,
And having heard my story, he took 400 dollars
  from his left boot where he kept money and gave it to me
  "take it, kid, you'd need it for the lawyers;" the story of the ring forgotten;
The last time I saw him in New York,
I was with my dad, buying a TV set,
When Gregory jumped on us, out of nowhere,
cursing the commercial habits of high capitalism— "don't you come from
Europe folks," he yelled, "don't you have some taste and elegance?
You don't need this junk to fill your brain with non-seeeense", he said
And then disappeared into Astor place
muggy dust for ever..

Cedric Herrou

Is my hero
He led 123 migrants
To find shelter and food near Marseille and then he was arrested
8 months of prison
Since it is against the 2012 law to help
Migrants in distress
Or should i spell it out in
Different languages:
Evil spreads like a poisonous web
All over this place

Charles Freeland

from *Bad Luck Mérimée*

i.

The circle stops three quarters of the way to completion,
other wards in New Orleans with similar geometry
housing soul and ghost. They dissolve into cane brake and loose sand.
Echoes might cease here as well or make their professional debut
using tape recorders to capture their encounters. No one is certain.

I check my watch. It has stopped trying to juggle raising its twin daughters
and there are no batteries which might return the county's tallest title
from neck to underarm to groin. I step into the scrub and sand
where the circle has terminated and expect immediately to be surrounded
by stinging insects and interrupted vistas. Those who line the horizon,
who would meet once a week outside class to discuss *Ceromitia mitrata*,
barely alter their appearance. Someone is waving from the other side.
I think. It is hard to tell because, as of the census of 2013
there were 402 people living there. A disembodied fear appears
like the Kenan Visiting Writer researching in Ulvshale
or a fighter jet buzzing low over your picnic. I am practiced at neutralizing it,
hunting on the ground for ovulids or false cowries, after all those years
of family members jumping from the shadows to startle me,
to introduce me to yet another member of the Isosceles Club,
and, of course, that stint in prison.

ii.

The train whistle a final declaration of faith as preface sounds
like naked pink and newborn young choking on their own emotions,
the beef offal or chicken added as part of a one-year agreement.
It is a sound like someone's lover newly come from the Zero Point border station
calculating literacy rates and the ultimate armchair ride
with genuine consequences for those who hear it, who stumble endowed
with superior memory and a weaker form of the Urdu virus
from the tavern to the streets to the cul-de-sac where
the households all use archaic spellings for the word "weasel"
and are some of the most frequent targets of artillery.

The magnetite nearby can disrupt navigational compasses,
landing you in the wrong bed.
The owner whispers creeping vole-like conspiracies in his sleep,
pursuing tax evaders through a castle and a palace on top of a mountain.
My hands have no hair on them. Not simian, but porcelain
and I am embarrassed. I try to hide them beneath Byzantine
linens but I need my hands to perform certain functions
like turning doorknobs and handling the jewelry the man studying Euclid
while working in his uncle's bank tries to sell me whenever he sees me.
Earrings with bright emerald variations like the skin of a dragon
with Finnish as its mother-tongue, the thin tin rings hammered out
in the town two counties over with the modest outsider's gallery at the center
and the faint aroma of slaughtered hogs.

iii.

All tunnels on the north border terminate at Pony Canyon
allowing the police time to train their hounds
installed lengthwise within the frame.
They shore up the popularity of swamp music
increasing their resolve, a show of defiance and love.

We throw rocks displacing 5th vertebra
from the highest properties and districts listed as pre-Portuguese,
outcroppings, skeletal remains selectively binding and purifying
the target organisms until they fall harmlessly to earth like paper airplanes,
all but those destined to shatter a quartet
of Mihael Stroj's genre works and three hothouse panes.

Explosive plumes of steam transform your poignant interview,
transferred by deed or will, into the likeness of a bald man
whose loose bolts were able to escape inspection
and then dissipate from the scalp down. There is nothing left
but the bitter scent of marigolds and travertine pools,
the last great castrato roles and a cackling from the east.

Appointed one of the arbiters, I incorporate the sounds revolving
around the fallout rate of a given funnel.
They arrive there ahead of me just the same and stake out
their optional histories otherwise unremarkable, space in the shadows
between the escalator and an arcade of native oak,
the statue of Marcus Aurelius with scarlet and green Mardi Gras beads
draped about its throat.

Time to re-assess the value of dreams, to write up my dear ones
and searchlight, to cut down on the vandalism, if nothing else.
Announce the daughters of prominent socialists from Lomza
and the space-time-space conversions and rounding errors
of the sort that originate in polite compliments and childhood mischief
at the strip mall, and terminate in the faerie ether
become the very vault and regular edition of myth, of bridge abutments
with Venus on them, someone's ugly widow.

Hazel Smith

The Accountants (or Brexit for Breakfast)

Should we hold a referendum on reality? There are a lot of different ways of counting votes.

We could set off an emergency evacuation, then everyone would have to leave the world.

The backroom operators have disappeared before their time. The deals are locked in showrooms, until someone throws them away.

Dubbed speech is out of synch. Teleprompters everywhere are refusing to convey what they are told.

Have you heard the news about the universe? They say it refuses to remain.

The ocean is turning into plastic, whales are being swallowed whole by sharks.

Everyone is confused about entrances and exits. Imperial perfumes have lost their fetid smell; royal titles their inherited sway.

Red lines are morphing into mothballs, yellowhammers strut their dwindling prey.

The economics of the casino, proroguing as a national sport.

The girl with the scarred face is the only positive thinker in the room.

Faking It

Lee Israel forged
the letters of literary luminaries
to boost her flagging bank balance

but the main satisfaction
was planting writing
even better than
that she parroted

is forgery creative
rather than contemptible?

authenticity types with many hands
sprouts hybrid languages

the experts (blindfold)
could not tell the Stradivarius from
the cheap contemporary model

Picasso once said
he 'would sign a very good forgery'
as if reproduction could summon up the real
and the self might swap places with a shade

(if I found
my violin was a fake
I would still enjoy
playing it)

a man sometimes
forged his wife's signature
arguing she would have penned it
had she been there

she presumably agreed to
this eclipsing intimacy

some fake pleasure
finding reward in counterfeiting
or trying to live up to
what they think
others want to hear

some never seem to be
telling the truth
even when they are

(artificial flowers
are not the same as
artificial intelligence)

sporting hero dopers

may outgrow
those who stayed spotless

— some of my students
probably plagiarised their poems
without my discerning it —

but does a trophy shine
when dulled with fake attainment?

a friend sharing a hoax
on his Facebook page
did not realise
it was a trick

you cannot survive in a world
where you believe
everyone is telling lies

advertisements sell
fake tablets for arthritis

didgeridoos and boomerangs
mass-produced in Bali

politicians repeat stale mantras
as experts pile on proof that
everything they said was phony

it is 1475
fake news
is big in Trento

the claim:

the Jewish community
had murdered
a two-and-a-half-year-old
Christian infant Simonino

all the Jews in the city
arrested
tortured

fifteen burned at the stake

sometimes writers
parody themselves

known for a distinctive style
they are doomed
to adopt it

many a poem
struggling to be sincere
seems false

a robot could do better

Emergent Emergencies

she engaged with the plants and the birds, beyond names, beyond taxonomies
sometimes in a restaurant I finger the flowers to test if they are artificial
the mis-capes of our senses, the mistakes of imaginations
she realised now how much she used synaesthesia as a technique and toolbox
it was unclear from the muggy conference paper what the speaker was mistily proposing
his home was a converted warehouse where he held gigs for the underplayed
they mapped their indigenous homelands together with him to resist the threat of mining
the island of Sommarøy self-declared itself as the world's first time-free zone
kingdoms that had previously been united started breaking into tiny pieces
is my microphone on? she asked, igniting the loose switch of hearing
a woman woke up from a coma after twenty-seven vaporised years
for enjoying music, you are more of a performer than a listener
don't treat as a metaphor that which is completely literal
who killed Dag Hammarskjöld: do we even know that he was murdered?
the girl never looked up from her phone in eye-assaulting surroundings
she was blind but saw concrete objects, he pierced the world through a muting haze
melting ice and psychological meltdowns made for a cosmic cocktail

Postscript

When she read the letter again, she felt the same dismay as when she first encountered it. It was surprising that the letter had survived, interred under other letters. It was over forty years old, part of an era before email. It should have been torn up or burnt; it would have been better if it had been, but it had endured.

The letter had been in a box with other letters and although she had sorted methodically through that box several times, she had never found it. Then suddenly, when she opened the box yet again, it rose up still alive, unlike its author or the sentiments it transmitted.

The box was the archive she had made of her mother's papers. Her mother had snatched the letter from her and then kept it. She had saved it as evidence but evidence of what?

She had a choice because she could avoid reading it again. At the moment she could only remember the tone and the drift and not the actual words. She did not need to invite the letter back in, allow it through the door.

But the letter offered itself like a sick temptation and so she did read it. It was still disturbing even though so much time had passed and everything in the letter had been resolved and no longer mattered. The pain was quieter, much quieter, but it was still drawing breath. Nothing in it was meant or felt anymore. Yet those words had been said, and words cannot be reversed, though they can be forgiven.

The letter had been written to try and stop her from marrying. But marry she did.

She did not want other people to read it and it would have a different import for them. Only she could unpick its code. Only she could know that its threats were not really threats and had evaporated, as if they had never been.

Only she could grasp that the sender had never wanted to write the letter in the first place.

Much had happened since she had last read the letter. She had acquired a context for it; she could see it in a less destructive light. She still disagreed with it, she brooded about why anyone — let alone a father — would pen such a letter, but she also understood it a little more.

The letter was present in every other letter she received even though it was a remnant from the past. It had outgrown itself, had evolved beyond the moment in which it was written and the fear that induced it. It was warning and incentive, meaning and its collapse.

It formed the basis of everything she had since read, everything she had since written.

Cool Shrug

tall gesture road mine bloated stance unsafe dousing changing lunacy shuddering reminder resisting incest buoyant depletions dreamt menstruating unsettled chicken cool shrug suddenly seen ideas squinted deftly counting assumed ambit chickenfeed composite burbling tombs sense unwrapped plaza wavering unsettling cooking nearby homebody child's absorption

unsafe road tall tombs child's shrug unwrapped chicken composite ideas incestuous burbling buoyant wavering bloated homebody sudden dreams deftly cooked seen resistance changing absorption assumed menstruation depleted stance nearly counting chickenfeed sense doused plaza cool reminder squinting lunacy mined ambit unsettling gesture cool shuddering

burbling stance bloated gesture composite shudder dousing tombs unsettled plaza chickenfeed stance tall ideas coolest depletions suddenly deft changing shrug homebody squinting dreamt reminder mine child wavering absorption buoyant resistance nearly lunatic cooked chicken assumed road unsafe ambit incest unwrapped menstrual counting

Peter J. King

Polyglottal Stops

This is a sort of Theme and Variations; the first poem is the theme, being taken from a sequence (*A Journey*) that alternates autobiographical poems and more general or abstract poems.

I took the original, and put it through Google Translate, "translating" it into one language, from that into another, and so on. After every five or six transitions, I translated it back into English, and recorded the result. This is what was produced: an odd narrative in which we are led (often perplexingly) further and further from the starting point.

P.J.K.: December, 2020

Theme

winter winds
were almost solid
forming barriers between the school and me
or walls for me to lean against
or wild and wickedly capricious sprites
that waited for my guard to drop
to pick me up and plop me in the frigid water
of the grey Maud Foster Drain
pecked by swans
and tangled in the ribbon weed
then swept on under Bargate Bridge
and past the still-sailed windmill
past the school
to haunts of vole and kingfisher
and chilly ease

Variations

I.

Winter winds
There was no major damage
This creates barriers between us and the school
Or sloping walls
Or wild and angry whimsical spirits
He waited for my guard to fall
Take me and dive into cold water
Educate a gray maid
Swansea Peck
The tape was stuck in the grass
Then he crossed the Bargate Bridge
The ship is still sailing
School ended
For outdoor mouse and sea fisherman
And cold

II.

Cold winds
There was no major damage
This creates barriers between us and the school
Or slope walls
Or wild spirits and creative rage
He was waiting for my guard to fall
Take me and immerse me in cold water
Come with the gray maid
Swansea Beach
The tape was stuck in the grass
He then crossed the Bargate Bridge
The ship is still under construction
School is over
For outdoor rats and marine fishermen
And called

III.

Cold wind
No significant damage was reported
This creates barriers between us and the school
Reverse wall
Wild o wild souls and creative wrath
Wait for my guard to fall
I'll take it and soak it in cold water
Join the Gray Girl
Sanctuary Beach
Tapped in the tap
He crossed the Bargate Bridge
The ship is still under construction
The school is too much
For outdoor mice and fishermen at sea
And a profession

IV.

Cold weather
No major damage was reported
This creates barriers between us and the school
Changing the wall
Wild spirits and evil creatures
Wait until my guard falls
I took it and put it in cold water
Join the gray girl
Holy beach
Press one tap
He crossed the Bridge Bridge
The boat is also under construction
The school is crowded
For rats and fishermen overseas
Activities

V.

It's freezing
No major damage was reported
This creates a barrier between us and the school
Change the wall
Wild spirits and evil creatures
Wait till my guard falls
I take it and put it in cold water
Enter the ashes girl
Sacred beaches
Click on the tap
He crossed the bridge from bridge to bridge
The boat is under construction
School is full
For rats and foreign fishermen
work

VI.

It's cold
No major damage was reported
This creates a barrier between us and the school
Replace the wall
Wild Spirits and Evil Creatures
Wait for my crew to arrive
I'll take it and put it in cold water
Enter the country direction
Sacred beaches
Click Find
He goes from bridge to bridge
The ship is being built
The school is full
For open and open fishermen
work

VII.

the weather is cold
No problem with dehydration
This creates a barrier between us and the school.
Replace the wall
Evil spirits and evil creatures
Wait for my team to arrive
I'll take it and put it in cold water
Enter the urban road
The river is sacred
Click Search
Moves from bed to bed
The ship is being built
The book is full
For open and open hunters
the work

VIII.

cold weather
There is no problem with drying
This creates a barrier between us and the school.
Wall replacement
Evil spirits and demons
Wait until my group arrives
I took it and put it in cold water
Into the city street
Sacred river
Click Search
Go from bed to bed
They are building the ship
The book is full
For open and open hunters
work

IX.

The air is cool
There is no problem with drying
This makes school break.
new wall
Evil ghosts and monsters
Wait for your group to arrive
Set aside
On the streets of the city;
Spiritual River
click Search
Bed
He is building a boat
His book is full
In fact, the opening and opening of hunters,
work

X.

The weather is great
Drying is not a problem
This will destroy the school.
New wall
Demons and monsters
Wait for your team to arrive
Sleep next to you
On the streets of the city;
Spiritual rivers
Click Search
Idol
He built the ship
The book is full
Truly, the Saviour opened,
Create

XI.

The weather is good
Drought is not a problem
It will ruin the school.
dawn
Demons and demons
Wait until the team arrives.
Sleep next to you
On the streets of the city
Spiritual river
Click Search
Idol
He built a boat
This book is complete
There really is a Saviour
Build

Mark DuCharme

Faint History of What You Didn't See

The moon arrives like fruit
Or a plaster redaction no one sees
The past in who we are
When we come up for (burnt) air
No one sees inside (us)
The past is now, as much as raw

    Earth & All that's
    Stalled

The moon arrives, perhaps with a guest at the scene
Of a crime when you read or
Linger
Then imagine how to follow
It knowingly, to the scene
Of the plan or its reflection
In a creek or (burnt) stairwell—

    We fear least what placates
    Our throats in fields of
    Winter

Moon arrives like smoke—
'We' isn't 'us'—
'Us' isn't anyone we recognize
Anymore— we do not conform—
(You) who (is) not ('you')
(Is) us (or almost) all
(You who still) aren't thralled (by you or/
                                me)
        To think in mortal hardware
    To wear the face of someone else
To wear the face of the moon at night

        Full of reasons
        Not to bleed

Names

Tampico Henri isn't through with you yet
Midnight's crazy with buybacks

The ghosts of arcade stranglers gum up the landscape
Winds whisper through rotten motels

I know the reason you don't whistle
Polymaths glam up at the first sight of kitchenware

Until forests also spurn the new
Math or its variants

On a Tuesday weather permitting
Let's meet behind the fence just once

If you whisper rotten sandwiches

Sometimes the trees
Don't need any examples

Winds may go
By other names

What River

Evening washing away the lanes.
First body paragraph: not
Really a nap, but not
Not one, either. Light

Folded over music as
Disruptive peace. The colors
Were garish yellow, melon, umber,
Puce or prune, mint-

Purple, cabin-fever amber, wilted
Green, pale chicory & peach-
Lemon, out-of-tune synesthesia of a partial
Lavender or turquoise. The froth of ice in

Wine when it melts. Second
Body paragraph: the truth comes in
Stammers— see
You where the fishing nets hang

Loosely, down the building's
Exterior. A can of fish solder
With garments set to go
Astray

If you can't wander off, I won't
Look for you later
Where you still don't know
What the river feels.

Landscape with Muffled Cries

Regulators stuffed the eucalyptus trenches
Like the voices of those near us who
Do not reach the end

Asleep in the sculpture where the moon won't
Land
A hungry risk, or bag of worn-out

Lemons. Lather or ladder? An elbowed
Demeanor. The sun is low
& We aren't far. The pontoon is loaded with sand.

Crisp density. Swollen eyes.
Now is the time if you want a parade; the
Avenue is hungry.

Put your foot on the bandana & stumble.
I've had enough of boutique smiles. The picture
Flattens the ligature—

Pieces of bird matter in the linoleum filter
Being neither depth nor arcade. You aren't here.
Erase pediments while fierce crows beckon.

Days

Your life in reach I never will
Dream of Tuesdays without stars.

It was destiny never to meet—
The cake uneaten, the notes destroyed

Or lost to time's shuffling.
I had wanted to warn you about

The privet halls & their oblique
Sense of wovenness

But the pipe clipping had been delayed
By bitter dowagers who soon burst forth

Despite our weary exhortations.
When you live in Greenland, must you do

As the local new musicians do? There it is
On your hat rack. Do you believe us now

As we whistle past the eddies to the next appointment
With a Mr. Cooper, who is overly fond of the word

Sagacious & repeats it often? The trees
Now in leaf & flower will soon be

Driven to barrenness by harsh winters. Do not fail
To irritate the woodpecker, for he will respond

In kind, & with a gravity proportionate
To his steely allure. Meanwhile, women are weaving

Bongos somewhere— of this, you can be sure!
& The polka dot arrangements seemed gaudy at

The time, but we persisted with the nostalgia,
The febrile curiosity. War had been averted,

But our hopes reduced to ash, & all they
Embellished to an ever-expansive narrative

Framework, like a loom, onto which a tapestry
Had been woven the wrong color. No one will notice,

You said, after time undoes it, while we shunt
Forward to decay— a little closer with each passing day.

Mary Cresswell

ODE TO PIXELS

if you were atoms, I would be over the moon
and I would build a brand new world

if you were raindrops, I would be equitable
and dump you on California and Australia

if you were wasps, I would be again equitable
and point you at the luxury resorts

if you were white light, I would ask you to
please show me how the colours all fit in

if you were words, I would laugh hysterically
and ask who let you go to the shops on your own

if you told me you were useful information, I would
tell each and every one of you

to pull the other one

MISSION CONTROLLED

Kill off cats
stoats take over

kill off stoats
rats take over

kill off rats
plans made over

strategic planning
butts to cover

lecture stricture
voices louder

traps and baits
signs of power

bigger study
budgets better

stats to cover
fur and feather

.
.
.

no one else is
here to see

a planet packed
with Blattidae.

Kenneth Rexroth

Columns from the *San Francisco Examiner* of 1967

Finland Sparkles

HELSINKI. — Here we are in Finland, a country I've always wanted to visit and had begun to wonder if I'd ever see. Of all the people who have gone to make America, the Finns are amongst my very favorites, and their country turns out to live up already to my expectations.

We went off on a Finnair Caravelle in the sunset and a strong north wind blowing. Soon we were above the low ceiling and under the winter stars. I should imagine in the long summer daylight the flight over Denmark, Sweden and the Baltic would be quite a spectacular sight, but we saw only the spectacular stars.

The Finnish character began to manifest itself before we ever started. The waiting passengers were more relaxed and friendly than similar German groups alongside them, waiting for the next gate. When the stewardesses showed up they were pretty girls, full of bounce, who acted like they were off on their first airplane ride to visit grandma.

The direct flight to Helskinki takes less than two hours — the flight from Berlin to Hamburg about 45 minutes. After the overcrowded shuttle planes operated by the three Allied airlines in Berlin with their "we couldn't care less, you're our captive customers and have to deal with our attitude," the atmosphere of convivial service on Finnair was another startling contrast.

There were fresh newspapers in at least six languages. There was an excellent dinner, chicken with mandarin sauce, rice with pimentos, green beans, cake, a banana, and a choice of wines. I had a good and authentic Beaujolais — 15 cents in tourist class, free up front, and one of those wonderful Finnish liqueurs made of Arctic wild berries.

On only a couple of the airlines in all the world have I ever encountered such attentive girls. It was as though they were special emissaries of the Department of Tourism, out to make you very welcome to Finland before you ever got there — experts in advance hospitality.

We landed in a fine snowstorm, pine trees and snowy roads under street lamps and Christmas lights, and then we were out in Helsinki and through a perfunctory but brisk customs — 25 degrees Fahrenheit and just enough dry

snow falling to make us feel like we had arrived with Santa Claus. There was our friend Jubani Jaskari [*spelling unclear*] to greet us and we drove through the pine-wooded suburbs into the glittering and spacious city.

Don't laugh, but Helsinki is like San Francisco. It is a relatively small city which is the capital of an exceptionally highly civilized area, so with only about 500,000 people it has all the cultural amenities of a major capital — museums, opera, ballet, theaters, symphony, chamber music, all far beyond that to be found in, say, Lyons or Sheffield or Cincinnati. I doubt if there are many places where *Ubu Roi*, *Waiting for Godot*, and the Farquhar-Brecht *Trumpets and Drums* are all playing on the same weekend.

It certainly sparkled for us the first night — that is the first impression — everything, the great shop windows full of goodies, the coffee shops with hip young people who were so much less dragged out than those in Berlin or London, and not interested in being conspicuously evil, and the people themselves sparkling, as though life was always Christmas Eve.

The Finns themselves tell you that everybody is sullen in the long winter darkness and that they are a naturally taciturn and formal people. Maybe a revolution has taken place since the Second War amongst the taciturn races, because the Dutch, who are certainly the most ebullient and talkative people north of Naples, still describe themselves in terms of the Dutch stereotypes of two generations ago. I had a lot to do with the various Finnish Workers' Clubs in the labor movement between the wars and I never thought of them as frisky, but frisky they are now.

We put up at the Hospiz. This is an excellent hotel, run by the NNKY, the Finnish YMCA. Don't confuse it with the hotels run by the Y or the Salvation Army in America, England, Germany or France. It is not cheap by European standards, it has rooms with baths and showers, equipped with modern Finnish furniture, about like a good American motel, and yes, it has a sauna.

Hospiz NNKY is thoroughly Finnish. The only sign of religious sponsorship is a notice that alcoholic overindulgence and conduct offensive to Christian moral customs are forbidden. And a wall motto in each corridor, "Jesus Christ is here." That's fine with me, so much better than being blinded in the lobby by flashlight [*two indecipherable words*] at Brigitte Bardot. It is all as clean as the falling snow and you could not just eat off the floors but actually perform surgery on them.

[January 1, 1967]

Paris Is Provincial

PARIS. — When writers and artists and musicians from Warsaw, Belgrade, Barcelona, Rome, Milan, Prague visit Paris nowadays they all have the same comment — "How provincial it all seems!"

Those cities, for differing reasons, are more or less isolated politically, but their intellectuals are grappling with truly contemporary problems, and seeking truly contemporary answers.

Talking with Simon Vinkenoog in Amsterdam, or Olaf Lagerkrantz in Stockholm, or Oili Makki in Helsinki, or Hugo Claus in Audenarde, I never for one second felt any strangeness, any sense of foreignness — we were all citizens of one country, newspaper editor, weaver, dramatist, we all spoke one international language, a kind of Esperanto of the spirit.

This is not true of German intellectuals. They are completely identified with the German Establishment. They may be alienated, but it is with a German and an Established alienation.

The French are different. France is not a nation, it is a decayed civilization. The foundations of that civilization were laid in the 16th and 17th centuries and given their final form in the mid-19th.

What we think of as typically French, in any field — art, dress, literature, cuisine — was shaped during the reigns of two rulers who nobody in France admits to liking — Louis XV and Napoleon II. The molds have been cast, any copies taken will have the same shape.

To have essential change, you would have to break the molds. Theoretically, that was what the Dadaists and the Surrealists were going to do, break the molds. Instead, they were absorbed and then it became apparent that what had seemed the most destructive revolt was simply the decadence of the old forms.

Today, Robbe-Grillet is not even a decadent Stendhal; he is a rundown Dumas. Contemporary French poetry is much like the indistinguishable books of verse written by the petty mandarins of American academia that flow across my desk, all exactly alike, year after year.

France is in a period of social and political consolidation in which everything is homogeneous and homogenized. It is a time much like that of the first Napoleon, which is one of the most barren, creatively, in all French history.

The first night in Paris we had dinner with an old friend, a lifelong apparatchik, a real specialist and trouble shooter for the left, a very good poet and critic, a journalist who has traveled all over the world. One would certainly expect a man like this to be thoroughly internationalized. Yet he made a remark I shall never forget, which pretty well sums up what has happened to French intellectuals.

With a proud smile he said, "Do you realize that for a week last autumn we had more gold, more dollars and more Eurodollars than you did in Fort Knox?"

"We?" "You?" Buster, I didn't have a dime in Fort Knox, and I don't know what a Eurodollar looks like. Constant concern with such considerations is spiritually obliterative.

Perhaps that is why the one institution which still preserves something of its international character, and which still operates in the vanguard of modern thought, is the advance guard of the Catholic Church.

Both Marxism and Existentialism are withering on the vine in their official forms, yet the ideas first raised by those creeds are today being discussed and revalued in the most creative fashion by Catholic thinkers, most especially the Jesuits and Dominicans.

The most radical economic organizations are the Young Catholic Workers and the Young Catholic Farmers.

We went to Mass at Saint-Séverin, on the edge of the student quarter and the slums of Montebello. Liturgically this is one of the most radical churches in the world. Ten years ago they were already saying most of the Mass in French, facing the congregation, and with several priests concelebrating.

[February 19, 1967]

Barcelona

BARCELONA. — The warmest winter on record — the Pyrenees loomed up ahead of the plane as snowy and massive as the Sierra Nevada of California, but underneath Andorra lay, already green with spring.

One thing about Spain — it sure looks Spanish, even from 800 meters — yellow earth and pink rocks and gray-green forests and bright green fields. It's a country where you know where you are.

We went to a clean, efficient little hotel — the Rialto, on Calle Fernando of the Ramblas in Barcelona, a welcome relief after our Paris *pension*. Two hundred and fifty pesetas (about $4, winter rate) for a double and a single, both with showers and w.c. Spain is not as cheap as it was, but it is still cheap.

And then to dinner in one of the great restaurants, the Agut d'Avignon on the Calle Avino. Again — a spectacular dinner for three for $10.

Barcelona has changed so much in the eight years since I've seen it that it's hard to believe. It has been swept up in the "economic miracle" of the new Europe.

There are only a few shoeshine "boys" left and they're old men and only a handful of tarts around the sailors' cafés on the Calle Esendilles, and they are aging beauties. The disappearance of young women and boys who enter those two professions out of necessity is one of the first and most conspicuous signs of the new economy. But certainly they are minor signs — or are they? After all they mean that boys and girls no longer need to degrade themselves.

Barcelona in fact looks more prosperous than San Francisco. There are new buildings everywhere, prosperous shops full of every conceivable merchandise including heavy consumer goods on sale at special time-payment rates — there are even discount houses in a city where all prices seem discounts, although they're nearly double what they were a few years ago. So is the population, now about three million.

Barcelona not only looks like California, it is like California — bursting at the seams with the new economy and with one million immigrants from the south.

Like Los Angeles, it has always been a hazy city under a cap of warm air trapped between hills. Now there are cars everywhere like an infestation of horrible tin vermin. You'd not be at all surprised to see streams of them crawling over the towers of Gaudi's Sagrada Familia. (Give them time, they soon will be.) We happen to have encountered exceptionally clear weather. It is quite possible to see the surrounding hills through the smog, but they tell us it's the first time in months.

At this time of year it is possible to avoid the worst of the tourism with which Spain is afflicted — the bargain-basement tourism which has meant 20 years of steady input of money and so has sparked an economic surge forward which is really only just now beginning

This month tourists are at a low ebb, and the restaurants and museums are given over to the inhabitants. Those inhabitants certainly know how to live.

I don't care much for Spanish culture proper, but the Catalans are amongst my favorite people. What they really are is the old Provençal civilization, overwhelmed in the south of France but still living on with the spirit of the Troubadours in Catalonia. The language, of course, is really a variety of Provençal.

Barcelona is like Helsinki — there is an electric charge of vital excitement in the air. Over a million people from the rest of Spain have emigrated to Catalonia in the last few years — but they seem to be assimilated and liberated, sometimes with startling effects, like San Francisco affected the young Allen Ginsberg.

Prosperity, consumer economy, new technology, Catalonian rambunctiousness, all combine to produce a profound social ferment, a yeasty digestion and transformation which penetrates to every aspect of the society with explosive results.

We arrived just as the university blew up in Berkeley fashion — but it's all part of a general process — modern painting and music, Catalan poetry, social protest, smog and electric refrigerators.

[March 5, 1967]

The Temptation to Remain in Italy

MILAN (Italy). — Why go anywhere else when there's Italy? The first time in adult life I left Italy, over the Simplon, and looked back and saw the land where the pomegranate blooms and the nightingales sing, lying all gold in the afternoon, tears filled my eyes at the thought I might never see it again. But I did several times.

Now coming back once again, with gray hair, my temptation is to stay. Italy will still be beautiful — but someday I won't be coming back. Why do I leave? What have I got elsewhere that isn't better here?

Italy generates in me a steady state of exaltation, an abiding joy. Saints are supposed to feel that way. Certainly it is better than any drug. I can't imagine any more paradisiacal entrance to a land full of paradises than the Bellegio peninsula on Lake Como.

White Alps, blue water, yellow and pink villas, and the hillside covered with Christmas roses under the cypresses and umbrella pines and violets and anemones and masque flowers beginning to come out, and all topped by a great ruined castle where the Lombards stood in vain against the Franks.

Then through the high foothills to Milan and a day of steady sightseeing, the great Brera Museum, St. Ambrogio, Leonardo's *Last Supper*, the Cathedral and the four other churches.

Some of my favorite paintings are in the Brera — the Tintoretto *Discovery of the Body of St. Mark*, which with its companion piece in the Venice Academia, revolutionized my own concept of painting some 35 years ago.

The Piero della Francesca *Virgin and Saints* with an egg suspended over her head, a strange, entranced picture of a vision of creatures different from ordinary men, rapt away in another order of being, and the Luini frescoes, especially the reconstructed chapel.

So much modern taste has been formed by study of the Florentine painters. Their sculptured and colored figures set in boxes of deep space and distorted with an all-pervading mannerism have been congenial to the rigid classicism of the period from Cézanne to Surrealism.

Lombard painting has much to recommend it: an easy grace and sensuousness that goes back to the primitives, the contemporaries of Cimabue and Giotto.

And why is the *Cenacolo* of Leonardo the most successful of all the great set pieces of the Florentine High Renaissance? It is tattered and shattered and half obliterated, yet it still carries something that Michelangelo and Raphael lack.

The *Last Judgment* has nothing to do with Christianity — it is some special vision of Michelangelo's uniquely tortured soul — and besides, it looks self-conscious and contrived.

Raphael's *School of Athens* is certainly one of the purest and noblest utterances of man — but it verges on chemical purity and an inhuman nobility.

The Last Supper is a consummate dramatic statement by a man who had come late in life to that depth of understanding and universal sympathy which we think of as being peculiar to Sophocles and Shakespeare. We do not, certainly, think of Leonardo, over most of his life, as being Christian at all. I doubt if he believed in a single sentence of the Nicene Creed — except "And was made

man."

That, of course, is what makes the painting so great — his penetration into the simple and devastating tragedy of one man amongst 12 other men, a penetration so acute that it restates the tragedy in terms in which human nature is transcended. And it is all so simply and unpretentiously done.

Here for once Leonardo knew that the greatest art is the concealment of art. Mathematicians have analyzed the positions of the little loaves of bread and the gestures of the hands and every other detail — the picture is more complex, more "abstract" than all the products of analytical cubism, but reproductions of it hang on thousands of walls with candles before them.

[March 26, 1967]

Extincting Ourselves

LAKE COMO (Italy). — I am sitting in the high window of a villa overlooking the bend in Lake Como. It is just after sunrise and I am watching the cold air that has drained off the Alps all night give way to the rising warm air from Milan and the Lombard plain. It is a terrifying sight.

Down the lake where the sun cuts through the mountains is a slowly advancing wall of smog. There's no question — it is not morning mist — it has the reddish color and the ragged upper edges of industrial haze. As the wind changes, it creeps slowly nearer. I feel as though we were being invaded by Martians who were blanketing the earth with poison gas, or by some horrible malignant intelligent virus from Betelgeuse. Maybe we are.

Milan day and night except during storms lies under a dense cloud of carcinogens that spreads out for miles and rises into the lower valleys of the Alps.

I have flown from San Francisco to Los Angeles and seen the smog bank stretching from the Mojave out to sea past Catalina and curling up the coast as far as Santa Barbara.

Maybe something is happening we don't know about. Maybe the big molecules locked in the earth in organic fuels are intelligent and this is their way of achieving liberation and taking over.

The other day I sat in a little plaza by the sea in Barcelona. It was completely occupied by parked cars — right up to the walk around the fountain. Coming in

that night from Sitges we passed the all-glass-walled SEAT plant. Ten stories of glass incubator, lit by pale, fluorescent lights and filled with thousands of sleeping cars.

Maybe organic life and man with it is just a brief episode in the evolution of a mechanistic world — a temporary device by which the mechanical relationships of matter were enabled to rise to a new qualitative level. Now they no longer need us and they are slowly eliminating us. By the time the computers are self-perpetuating and can prevent any and all problems we will be gone.

I have said for years that the only organization I belonged to was the Sierra Club. Implied in such a statement was the idea I reject all politics-as-usual, Left, Right and Center. Today the only politics that matters is the struggle to save the environment necessary to the perpetuation of the human species.

We are busy, even without the atom bomb, making ourselves extinct. The most revolutionary movement today is the ecological revolution.

It proposes to turn mankind around and set it off in a totally new direction, away from the oblivion it is now manufacturing for itself.

Maybe it will fail. Certainly so far machines have been more powerful than men. Even an obsolete machine like the internal combustion engine, a kind of mechanical duck-billed platypus, is able to take over the cities of men the way certain parasitic ants take over another ant hill.

But an automobile engine can't compute. What's going to happen when those creatures on the Dew Line get tired of the cold and move south to the White House and the Kremlin. Or have they already, and we don't know?

[April 18, 1967]

Exemplary Theater in India

NEW DELHI. — Artists and writers are notoriously prone to waste their substance in talk. Perhaps in India they turn to action in protest against the prevailing ethos — as middle-class American students turn to marijuana.

I met a surprising number of doers, with a profound sense of social responsibility — in drama, poetry, music, television, radio, painting.

A leading Tamil poet translates those books he thinks of most value to India

from five European languages into two Indian ones, writes a newspaper column, and still manages to write important poetry.

The man in charge of the New Delhi TV station is dedicated to using the box that is idiotizing America to educating and unifying India. So with the radio director.

But best of all was Dr. Alkazi, director of the Theater and Dance Academy. Alkazi has not only worked a miracle is establishing a drama school and a high-quality, efficient academic and repertory theater, he has proven that, given leadership that inspires discipline and demands direct action, the Indian potential is tremendous.

If you can get these results from the Indian middle-class intelligentsia in the most talkative and quarrelsome of all professions, you can get it in political action too — if you just have enough leaders like Alkazi.

What Alkazi has done with the Indian Academy of Drama is to organize a theater and school which is the equal of the drama department of San Francisco State or UCLA, without their lavish plants, and with embellishments derived from lessons he has learned from visits to the German and Polish theaters, and with a strong foundation in the Indian traditional and folk theater.

This sounds modest — but, given Indian conditions, his success is incredible. His students learn all theatrical skills from stage carpentry and wiring to classical and folk and tribal music, dance and theater — including the very vulgar topical burlesque theater of Bombay.

His repertory of last year's major shows included Ibsen, Strindberg, Sophocles, Ionesco and two Indian plays — one, on Shah Tuqlagh, deserving a world reputation. His laboratory plays included Japanese Noh, the most recent "theater of cruelty," and plays in several Indian languages, some by his students.

His *Hedda Gabbler* was terrific — with a hair-raisingly beautiful and perverse Hedda — perhaps the best I've seen.

Along with the productions, the students translate the plays and the relevant criticism into their own languages and so build up a production library. They learn a wide variety of styles, from Stanislavsky's naturalism to the highly stylized techniques of Far Eastern theater to the new theatricalism of the Polish avant-garde.

Now it is true other academics do the same — but in Krakow or Stockholm, not in India. Alkazi's curriculum is wider and deeper than any in West Germany.

Further, being in New Delhi lends perspective — he and his students are not ridden by fashions. Brecht, Grotowski and Meyerhold are all part of a foreign culture which includes Antoine and Stanislavsky, too.

All this encounters resistance — all along the way. The large library of drama in all Indian languages, ancient and modern, is unequaled anywhere and until it was built up, no one person knew it all existed.

In 10 years the work of Alkazi will have diffused out from New Delhi to the most remote parts of the country — student actors, traveling shows, teachers, TV will have penetrated to the recesses of now antagonistic racial, caste, religious and language groups and helped to draw India together, strengthening both the cohesion and diversity of a country where now there is too little knowledge of anyone beyond one's own social group — with the results you read in the papers: fear, hate and violence.

The old caste and communal society, based ultimately on the extended family as the only really functioning social unit, is breaking down. It cannot be assimilated to a technological civilization — "post-modern and neo-capitalist" — but it is breaking down anyway from internal decay.

The role of a national Indian theater is to provide one new force for cultural integrity, for a new pattern of social life without which India would be doomed to chaos.

[June 11, 1967]

More on Thailand

BANGKOK. — Thailand is as unlike India as can be imagined. The cultivated parts are very densely populated, but the land is fertile and the people industrious and farmers skilled in their own way, so the country has more than enough to eat and an exportable agricultural surplus.

Distribution is better, both in a market and a class sense. There are plenty of wealthy Thais but few starving ones.

Bangkok is a modern city, full of well-stocked shops of all kinds and its streets crowded with cars — owned by Thais. Urban wages are high for the Orient, but they lag behind the inflation caused by the war boom and the sudden expansion of foreign investment.

Thais, like Japanese, learn the skills of modern technology very quickly and soon become at least as good as their teachers. Although to someone fresh from a cooler climate the country seems stunningly, stupefyingly hot, they are as busy and given to hard work and vigorous sports as the Finns.

Up country the old village life still goes on. Almost self-contained, 80 percent of the population is still engaged in agriculture and most of that on a traditional and buffalo-power basis. Yet the gap between the old culture and the new does not seem to produce the violent social conflicts that it does in many other underdeveloped countries.

Perhaps because Thailand is not underdeveloped in the same sense and the old culture is not failing but doing nicely by its own standards. No culture clash, no economic scissors, is cutting a schism across Thai society. The situation must be something like Japan in the early years of this century — speeded up by the tremendous input of foreign capital, and the abundance of foreign, most GI hard cash spent on the spot.

Of course this results in inflation — but not the ruinous, runaway inflation of Saigon — at least not yet. The Vietnam war is not going to last forever and it is unlikely to result in a Communist Southeast Asia. Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Taiwan, South Korea — I think we can expect economies like these to develop in Cambodia, Laos and both Vietnams, once peace has come. These are all heavy input economies, with agricultural sufficiency, not insoluble population growth as yet, rapid industrialization and urbanization and a slow modernization of the countryside.

Capitalist or Communist, it makes no difference — North Korea, helped by Russian and Chinese aid, has been booming for years and North Vietnam in the midst of war seems better off than not just India or Indonesia, but possibly China itself.

The problem of course is to control expansion and especially inflation in this temporary war boom and to prevent the disruption of agriculture.

Thailand is a favorite bailiwick of the leading White House economists and planners. Let's hope they can keep the economy from going on the rocks as well as keep war out of its boundaries.

It is tragic to read of the damage, personally and economically, these years of war have wrought amongst the Laotians — the most peaceful and lovely people

on earth. The Thais are pretty nice too and deserve to be shielded from the destructive forces that have come to them through no fault of their own.

[June 22, 1967]

***This was the last Rexroth column that appeared in the* San Francisco Examiner. *See the* San Francisco Chronicle *article below*.**

Who dunnit to Rexroth at the *Examiner*?
by John Morgan

"The journalists are just swine in this city."

The remark of outrage comes from Kenneth Rexroth, poet, critic, professor, journalist and until recently, the most civilized and literate voice on the editorial page of the *San Francisco Examiner*.

A few weeks ago, Rexroth and the *Examiner* parted company with what the *Chronicle's* Herb Caen judiciously termed "hard feelings." This is what brings out the expletives in Rexroth: that neither Caen nor any of Rexroth's other *Chronicle* friends checked out the rumor that he was pressured from his eight year old *Examiner* post by Police Chief Thomas Cahill.

"People told me about the rumor, then backed away," he said. "The *Chronicle* was terrified."

The story was, Rexroth said, that Cahill didn't like a Rexroth piece in Playboy, on the dark side of police work, and had gone to the *Examiner*, allegro furioso. Rexroth was fired, a few days after returning from a round the world trip, at something billed as a luncheon with the *Examiner* publisher. The paper got the word "from Washington" that Hearst couldn't renew his contract because it no longer was committing itself to long term contracts.

Rexroth was out, with a month or so of unpublished back columns. They will be run in compilation in the October *San Francisco* magazine, then Rexroth will buckle down to regular pieces for the magazine.

Shortly after the luncheon, Rexroth was called by a New Orleans talk show drumming up a program for a police convention in the delta. The announcer

told Rexroth he would try to get some San Francisco police officials to appear with Rexroth. He called Rexroth back. "Man, they sure don't like you. They won't go on with you."

Asked about the rumor, Ed Dooley, *Examiner* managing editor, told The Guardian: "That's a lot of crap." Rexroth, he said, was fired because he was only writing travel pieces. "I said to him, Ken, we want you back here to talk about the city."

Cahill couldn't be reached for comment. Said an officer in the chief's office: "Well, for Pete's sakes. The chief doesn't have anything to say about the hiring or firing on the city's papers."

[San Francisco Chronicle, September 25, 1967]

Bob Lucky

Dear Ron Padgett

I want you to know
that my students love
"Nothing in That Drawer"
I make them recite it
and tell them
they have to make it clear
where the volta is
without tracking lines
on their fingers as they read
This takes practice
and no one succeeds
without a little drama
One student paused
after the eighth line
and stared down into an empty drawer
It was a long pause
a pregnant pause so large
it felt like an elephant or a whale
about to give birth
When she finished reading
we were all convinced
she had seen something in that drawer

A Short Disquisition on Daydreaming

An idea is a hole
you climb out of

a hole is a depression
you climb into

to come up with something
while you stare at the sky

listen
to the whistling cry
of a hawk

looking down to see
what pops out
of the hole

Insomnia

What would I do if I ever went nose to nose with a proboscis monkey
or had an elephant slap me in the face?

And what is Sandi going to do now that her husband, a miserable human being,
has died? I think

I may have accidentally put a plastic yogurt container in the paper recycle bin
today — is it too late
to retrieve it? Should I call someone?

If I had dog I would walk it every day and not die of a heart attack,
but if the dog died I would die of a broken heart. What would I name it?

Does my son love me? Does he even like me? If he died, if he fell
off a cliff on a hike in a jungle
or a python squeezed him to death,
I wouldn't have a reason to live.

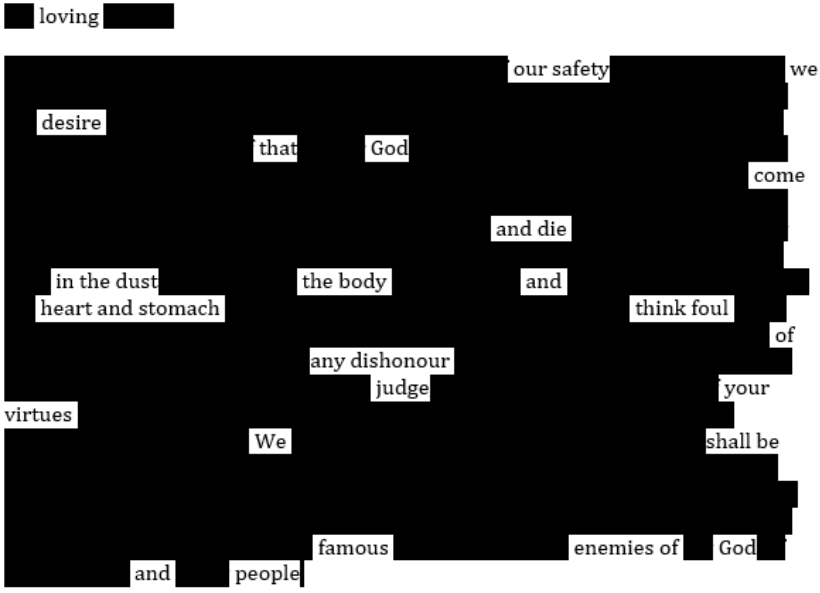
Would my wife give me a reason or would we hold hands and walk
down to the railroad tracks? I wonder

What time is it? What if I'm still awake
when it's time to wake up? What do I do
if I don't wake up?

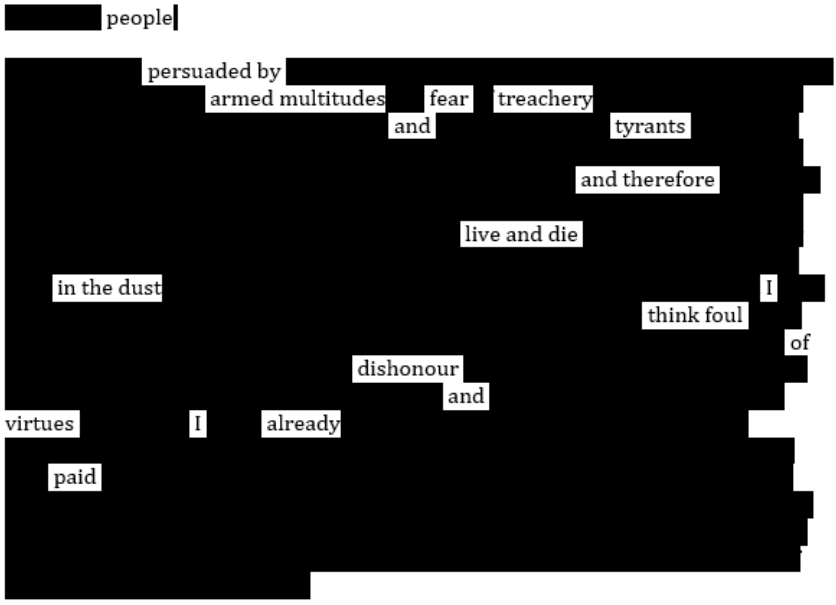
In the Dust

(Blackout poems based on Queen Elizabeth I's Speech to the Troops at Tilbury, 1588)

1.



2.


people
persuaded by
armed multitudes
fear
treachery
and
tyrants
and therefore
live and die
in the dust
I
think foul
of
dishonour
and
virtues
I
already
paid

Heath Brougher

Tornado Tantrum

Crackspot Creeklight
ZOO-Blake image
'among the tygertrees.

Astronauts jumping down marble sleeps,
dropped from above by creators
who once held a fauxless vision (*no-*
t learning from their fluttering failures).

Silly so((*x*)*xx*))cks
tequilafloods into gibberish existence
suckin on the Sucka Train Blues
with no sunlight to adorn the skin
or give hints as to proper pronunciation.

Weepen Walls
and my perfect semen.

I've died once before, I think.

Smashed photos.
A world of forgetting to remember.

I see the echoes of wars
on every bloody face.

Seed of the Soul's Cult

Born / automatic subcritical policies
impose / oxygenation creating fate
contemplative commercial / soul seizer
condition / awoken arose

springs forth possibility
of idiosyncrasies.

Mutated Negaminuets Obollowigg Rubric Tanka
(apologies to Eileen R. Tabios)

(Pegleaf Afadector
Gocadeffa Afizepo)
Pazlefa Afecquaca
Leadhooven Bablyvidodaste
Peresovem Accraslade
monkeys go to heaven
just like humans and Futants.

Appleslithers

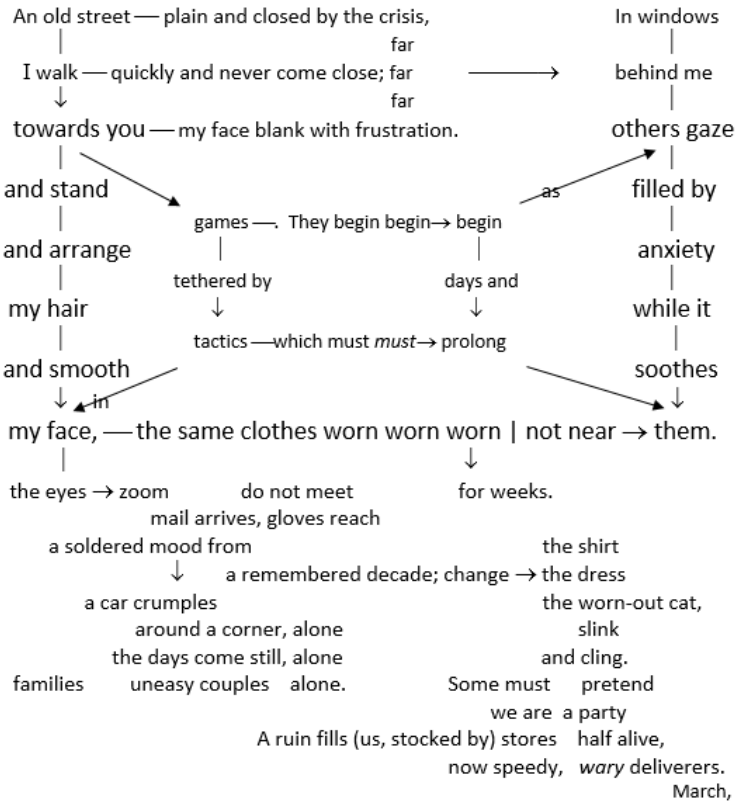
Varicose woman
in purple air
with bloody irises
as slush of fruitmilk rippledies
the evanescent water
will meet its maker its moisture
fondling cuntlips
nigh rainy orchidworms
dangling from the orchard's sky
opaline ice cream
melting in mouths

budding teen
in leaking menstrual sundress
finger sweats in iceless room
self-given orgasms slip loud
over curdled black pools
fresh innate
scumbling girl
rattles through drenched days.

Another Noise Poem

Thoughtlessness forced in from the outside;
always a loud rattlesnake ready to burst through the window
and sink a bellicose venom into the skin. The pondering
withers to a crisp brokenflower. This is Always;
inescapable; boisterous suburbia alive with its morning lawnmowers
severing grassblades in the dewy yards.
Grassblood cakes the neighborhood lawns.
a summer made of disease, not noticed, not basked;
occasional thought tries to muster a bloom
but an insurgence of clamor always bogs down
the florid headflower. Black after monotonous black
noise rises, thrives, drowning out thought
then giving way.

LOCAL ENCOUNTER



March, 31, 2020

I LEARN WHERE WE LIVE

I acknowledge
the new plays
undone ↓
drama we keep
close to home
within
the city no longer
built with energy;
begs begs begs — remains here and *begs.*
PITY the beggars: ——→ No one, no one … |
I will not beg
for each lost life Please Pray
for no one,
inconsiderate
the bad habits a nightmare
wears.
A fitted suit → even a cloud all
insists we notice. I wear sweat pants day
I acknowledge I wear sweat pants and
night.
We worry. Let us dramatize *needs* we cannot order
I stand repaired.
by a window, night, the ground has turned dark.
My face glows — a too strong light comes, everyone home
in the towers *every* window lit
every window lit
every window lit
for miles!

April 4, 2020

HARBOR HARBOR

The crews have disappeared ♪♪♪fog♩♩♩ but I deny this.
Happiness waits hidden,
| avoids |
for my rain not in section?
| through a ↓ ↑
mind vacuum behind the news. travel
| |
strolls. Sunday
↓ ↑
Are there —ships or ▲only▲ airplane-feathers→ in the nearly vacated
The harbor :
a [hospital] ship leaves – today?
The air force flew over – yesterday?
Sailors tour throughout our apartment.
They do a ♬ Broadway Show♬ dance ➡or⬅ No ⇓,
seamen groan, *quarantined* at sea.
~~waves~~ constant ≈≈ constant ≈≈constant ≈≈ constant ≈≈ constant
Life, a shore leave, a constant ~~joy, delight~~ *agreeable hopefulness*
written daily in the daily ship log.
🏴 The Admiral 🏴
Gives orders : ~~"Celebrate in the streets for three days."~~
"Confined to quarters."
"Show the flag!" ~~"Go out. Move the economy."~~
~~"Collect your pay."~~
"The Chinese began this!!!!"
It resembles a bat >>>> a cave in the distance.
Sail *there!*
~~Bring echolocators to New York Harbor.~~

Lack in a rain-season does not [rain much] enthuse.

Here
we —contrive one death,→ our absence
land where
on our no danger should reach us.
↘ poor judgement in a surf already nearly ↑ a disaster.
safe where
island —{undiscovered} in a→ forgotten lake.

Who aims the navies? Tankers fill but won't move.
Cargo?
Cargo cargo cargo —
poor workers endangered by hardhearted warehouses.
Repositories drop anchor ∩ jolted against featureless piers.

I —present myself, a very seasoned→ salt,
sit on suncharred
Ocean → do your acrobatics,
a part brine
your infinite journeys.
of my couch my
not skin.
covered I demand of my sea
by charts. wait …!

Again ⚐ The Admiral ⚐
for two hours gives orders.
"You are confined — on *full* alert —
not confined —
weld the ship ☿ airtight — allocate a cure for the not-at-sea sick —
~~Obey obey obey obey~~ —
I delegate all accountability
Rule to fleet commanders.
the Raise your own funds or
graves!!! declare bankruptcy."

On my couch I leave Pitcairn Island, or are we in Tahiti?
(check GPS)
east Panama Canal Kingston
north Norfolk Port Newark, or are we in Red Hook?
(check ~~cabs, local lingo~~, where gulls turn)



Sea → Power ← City
| ↑ messages
now Political arrived
delivers fast (once)
tonnage — vast wanders ↓ on (clipper) ships.
hurricanes powerful.
The ocean and the electronics ocean —
eons or instants — power in instants;
our world ship — *stopped* — a sudden island.
Around ♤ The Admiral ♤
are The Obstructer and The Quartermaster General
who OWNS *the* much money.
They need
each other
and despise (a good choice)
and play
money = power = money = power —
= = = =
don't criticize me I am
God of the Seas,
idol of endless waves.

Those alone with thoughts to lose ⟳ walk along docks and stare at stained tide
after ships leave.
I, by the harbor (on my couch) imagine the harbor.
I must watch cars [still wanted?) unloaded
bananas unloaded
Amazon ants
jaws [inhumanly] full of the Queen's desires,
orders orders orders orders *doubletalk*
doubletime.

paper towels unloaded

containers unloaded piled and piled
trucks.

ferries
with me on one,
waterfront views,
towers reflected
and fast decisions,
quicker than people can

yet deeds are done — near the harbor;
from a helicopter vantage ↘
from your (off site) terminals → look down: grain unloaded,
from your private island ↗ masks unloaded
{or do they fly?}

No-future
↓
The sea wears a mask —pulled tighter lately→ between
| |
a mask Do not let the continents,
| |
changed unfamiliar between
↓ ↓
daily. travel travel travel, *afraid* people.

I watch cold water, where's my face?
None or no one.

Summer hats unloaded:
try one on in a store.

My ship unloads.
I stay aboard,
stiff [attention] my posture.

I concentrate across → a distance.
Please, concentrate back.

April 30 – May 2, 2020

John Levy

For a second

I forgot what I was going to do. No,
it was more like nine seconds
before I remembered. What it was

I was going to do
doesn't matter, except
I was relieved I remembered. Then

it occurred to me that in a poem
I never wonder why I'm
in it, it's not like those times of walking

into a room and forgetting
why I moved there. Not

that I always understand what is

inside a poem

with me, or seeming not with me at all

but over there, and/or broken
into parts that
I imagine

could fit together. Yet
never once when I'm reading a poem have I
thought, *I don't remember why I came here*.

Quicksand

I wonder if in other languages there is always a reference to
speed. Embark,

if you wish, on your own research. I've got other fish to
name. As a child I never tried to imagine the view from the roof of

Old McDonald's barn, too busy listening. My parents never named me
George. "My voice is not what it used to be," the late crow

explained, before launching into a series of non sequiturs, not a
single one sounding at all like caw. As a child I often imagined

stepping into quicksand, by accident, alone, isolated in a small
clearing, and it wouldn't be until I had sunk

at least waist deep that some stranger would hear my cries for
help. The word quick, in quicksand, back then never

influenced the speed with which it pulled me down, which was
always so slow. The way I told myself these repeated

stories was that the stranger had to be instructed how to
save me. Fortunately, the strangers never said, "Sorry,

I've got other fish to save."

Yuki

(*for Angella Kassube*)

The Japanese word for snow, plus the name Angella gave her cat. When it snows in Minneapolis, which it does, the snow never completely fills the u in Yuki's name. Nor the opening at the top of the Y. Both spaces are too vast, as is Yuki's spirit, an immensity which animates her entire body and which Angella understands better than anyone when she looks into Yuki's eyes.

Dwindle & Krympe

Dwindle. In Norwegian it's krympe
and to my ear krympe
doesn't become a smaller noise as it's
pronounced, the way dwindle does

shrink. Of course I'm only listening to a woman (a real
woman?) say krympe on my computer. To me it sounds like
crim-Pah, but I've never been good with languages. I didn't
start talking until I was three, my mother

said. Before then I'd point
and when she couldn't figure out what I wanted
I'd cry. I wonder if the first three letters
of krympe are related to cry so now I enter cry

into the English side of the English-Norwegian website
and get grate, with a ring (a little circle)
over the a. The ring reminds me of whatever object my mother
said I'd point to, up on a shelf in the kitchen.

As for my mother, who died a little more
than 12 years ago, her presence
has not dwindled in my life. Can I say that?
Yes.

Then I send this to Dag, my Norwegian
poet friend, who I had in mind when I began writing this
and Dag writes back that krympe doesn't
mean

dwindle, it means shrink (which of course I didn't know
when I used that word earlier). Fortunately, he doesn't offer
the correct translation into Norwegian for dwindle.

Notes for Ken Bolton, 1/13/21

I am standing on a tile floor moving my fingers
on a laptop keyboard and a coyote is howling

outside again, in the dark of early evening, Wednesday.
I heard it first three minutes ago, one

voice. Not the chorus we often hear that seems
20 or more, but probably

isn't. You happen to be in Willunga Port
right now, not exactly

the other side of the world from Tucson, but
more than a few inches away. There appears to be

no Won'tunga Port
anywhere, and Google offers me, when I check,

an 11th Century monarch named Chakavarti Kulottunga
the First. I wish I, too, like you, had titled a book

A Whistled Bit of Bop. I hum a few bars of
Moon River, recalling how I'd sing it

with my mother playing piano
before my voice and the rest of me

changed. And now a crowd of coyotes
yip and scream, having surrounded

a rabbit? Quail? Hopefully not a neighbor's
cat or dog. Their cries aren't picturesque,

or grotestque, perhaps an artist would make an
arabesque to represent them, and more than a bit

of arabesque. The coyotes, silent now, perhaps
biting whatever they hunted down. But

should we mourn? I was out in daylight
in our yard, with Leslie, months ago when

a hawk divebombed into a tree hoping (I declare
here that hawks may hope) to devour

one of the quail within, and we were relieved
to see the hawk, empty-clawed, empty-beaked,

emerge. Though quails eat spiders, grubs,
worms, and

which life should be prized?
How about the female mosquito?

She flies and whistles
a bit of unbop, or is it antibop, or does she

whistle? You get a haircut tomorrow,
according to the poem *Double Trouble*, in

Australia, though not in the Port Willunga
establishment. I wonder if you ever showed

the published *Double Trouble* to anyone
in WINSTON COIFFURE (which becomes

WINSTON COIFFUREMENT the second time
you name it) and, if so, did the person

thank you for giving them the doubled plug?
I'm not sure if *plug* may mean the same things

in Adelaide or Port Willunga as it can in Tucson, but that's a
minuscule concern. Or concernment.

Jake Goetz

Farming kelp for a reparative state

to search for the source
of extraction in expression
while economies collapse
over breakfast and Brecht
isn't here to Instagram
his Weißwurst in the sands
of Byron Bay where 5G conspiracies
radiate foaming breakers
into COVID tanks moaning
like air being conditioned
out the back of a Dan Murphy's
and the sexuality
of machinery in its lust for
extinctions that anti-creation
search for bliss cum and oil warm
and thick dropping onto the stomach
of our anthropocentrism where we is a
producer of I solutions
jogging in city parks feeding the realisation
that all fictions now can be refracted
into facts as all frictions struggle
to depict truth as an act
listening now
as a baby cries to Nepalese singing
soothing the air above Sydney the morning
like an ibis smudged so brown
it's as if it was used to sweep
the chimney of a Victorian terrace
where Tibetan flags hang above a sign
that attempts to

STOP
COAL
SEAM
GAS

and perhaps
all one needs is a dream of the west
as a mosquito on the earth's arms

seeing how much it can suck
before being whacked
and so to be a bird of thought
edited by nothing but sun
in the memory of Pleistocene ice
melting revealing sandstone cliffs
that form valleys of ironbark
and eucalypt rivers that flood
down escarpments to shape
South Pacific estuaries
and how all these ideas are just volcanic
magma in the feet of water
watching two magpies circle and descend
dropping like an absence of rain
into the shower's bucket
startling the hair clip of a dragonfly
hanging from the memory of a bush of hair
its bright red tail denser than any
word-colour suggests
dipping its tail in a clear forest pool
cool on a 40 degree day
as you lay back into a place
where words are like kelp
tossed beneath a wave
sequestering carbon
for a reparative state

Winter song

through the purple hue
of dawn small clouds are thrown
from the lungs of joggers
upon church steps finding in their feet
a choir that sings
the ways in which we make
meaning milk
rhymed yet enjambed
spawning across fields
dissected by ideologies
only to be re-united
by snow's socialist approach
to economics as cows that may as well
chew through their own flesh
watching how people defend
everything a Glockenturm suggests
the way sunburst drinks up
the iced reflection
of the Liban Quarry's limestone pit
excavated by 800 Polish Jews
on the outskirts of Krakow
or on a lone night in a Copenhagen bar
listening to a drunk sing
Billy Joel's Piano Man
is this what we mean
when they speak of freedom?
notes streaming off like rain
against the window
of a Berlin bus
considering the Asr prayers
of Moroccan memories like a shawl that
wraps and hugs as a thought
is nothing more than the passing of time
drifting away from the centre
language the intertwining
of its fracture history in the continuity
of teeth hearing fruit bats screech
through the Shire's gentrified twilight
swimming in the warm beach

of a coffee in a Wroclaw café
outside a sparrow darts
between trees while yellow elephants
sit upon a fence undressing clouds
with their trunks what they reveal
is the revelation revelling in its own undoing
i.e. that each person's mental confinement
summarises nothing but pink strippers
whipping the dead meat
of a colonial sheep
standing at the Lidl check-out
beside a man who stinks of piss
and who with his last euros
buys some beer in search of everything
addiction can afford him
a tram bell rings and a couple kiss
laughing between bites of falafel
walking cobble stoned streets crapped on
by a history of horses
and working class love
their feet out of synch
with the crow that picks
the breadcrumbs in the gutter
in the glasses a waitress clinks
not thinking of how long
the sun's routinely made its visits anxious perhaps
for each sensation she's missed
in saving money for experience
perhaps shocked like the woman
who looks into the eyes of her lover curious
yet certain
that fear teaches more than anything
and doesn't this make all the difference
different to all the lines you'd thought
were the same?
take a long stretch of sand
in a war torn dream
drowned by an imagined Pacific
or night rising like a wave
as a group of alpha-males hold each other
by the shoulders in the street
howling verpiss dich into the illuminated windows
of Brno city and to realise

that all of them have cried themselves
to sleep at least once
in the dark of indecision
in the dank of hostel bunks
and that understanding
means nothing more than to stand under
something and look up
to consider time in the long hour hand
of Graz's Uhrtum time in something no greater
than yourself or to lose control maybe
yet still be able to swallow
and not throw up for how easy it is to give one's self
to a long unfaltering surge confusing reason
with years geography for tradition or a wash
of shopfronts with being old
and forgotten pissing and shitting language
between layers of glass and cement
where trees are ornate furnishings
not the lungs we breathe from
nor the woman who stands
in the middle of Odeonsplatz
and puts her teeth to a wurst
while the sound of a phone
leads her into another room a meme a god even
for there are voices that lean in the wind
and we fall to their singing
like snow in the Tyrolean mountains
only to feed the rivers in spring

Tony Beyer

Ominous signs

big wind
smears the sky

elongates clouds
from their edges

grey over white
intermittent blue

a sea bird
stranded in the suburbs

pads about
on webbed claws

we talk
about weather

because there's
so much of it

imperiling livestock
turning streets

into kayak lanes
or baking

the brown earth
crisp as pie

Last quarter

so far into spring
the port-wine magnolia

in the old hospital garden
where pukeko breed

is covered with pale green leaves
with only a few blossoms

still perched among them
like exotic birds

this year face masks
add to the usual detritus

batted about the place
by seasonal winds

the sea surface downhill
broken into pieces

busy but uninhabited
imitates the sky's

occasional cloud
occasional radiance

or a storm-troubled lake
over which anything might arrive

a triangular plastic sandwich container
a life-changing opportunity

or just a change in life
it all seems so normal

Plain tales

the hardware outlet
no longer sells
moon tigers

nor do the assistants
know what they are
those grey-green

citronella coils
that smoke methodically when lit
to dissuade mosquitoes

a summer requisite
of empire
on all continents

(with the exception
perhaps
of Antarctica)

indispensable
as gutta-percha
antimacassars and the flag

Stained hands

in my youth
like many of my generation
I too was a butcher's labourer
financing my way through

tertiary education
and early marriage
on the slippery ground
of the slaughterhouse

opportunities then
mindless but remunerative
we took with no thought
of despoiling the planet

not that any of us
exercised starker choices
running guns through Ethiopia
deranged in all his senses

our needs were
the needs of the moment
paramount and
without a future

fresh lambs' hearts boiled
in a knife steriliser
seasoned with coarse salt
from the hide floor

Modern life

I wish I could tell you
what there is to see

in Rothko's paintings
where one colour

hangs upon another
both absorbing and

resisting infiltration
but you must see it

the vertical receding
into depth past seeing

the movement still-
ness has always had

The Daughters of the Late Colonel

good name I thought
for a rock band

seeing their spoken-word
album cover

in an English resource room
back in the '70s

permed
but androgynous

Josephine on drums
Constantia on guitar

Katherine M doing
lyrics and vocals

*
No longer side to side your shadow
knows all about how a magician
waves one hand and slowly it becomes

a wrecking ball then all at once
there's a wall where you used to be
−you're dead and yet its stone

is half iron, half the same shovel
that shattered the Earth
and though you are listening

there's no letting go, each piece
is silent as it leaves a hole
where there was none before.

John M. Bennett

I B D O

~Instituto Basurero de Deshechos Obligatorios~

basta de espalda con su
aire de calambres basta de
politiquitos con su gula de
hígados y ojos extraviados
basta del revés tremendo
de los discursos del
espejo trizado basta del títere
desembocado desorejado
que muere con un peldaño
quemado en la boquita
pintada basta de esto y
basta de lo otro que me
rinde inconciente de mi
conciencia colada por la
sangre de mi silla de
incontinencia

E S

SOPA DE PAPEL INSANITARIO

◂MANIFESTES DES TEMPS POURRIS▸

whut shoulder torn was lapis twisted
cold hard blood your fusing neck a
spine prolapsed indebted to a book's
rant pages *to fulminate or cloud* is
tissue face is dust crushed beneath yr
step it's a crowder C lacking emptied it's
relojes con su tictoccito tantotonto
que no me devuelve la página de mi
tormenta risible de mi balde de
agüitas negras conservadas en el
armario de mi pasaje por la niebla

RUTA DE CRAPOLOGÍA

LHUZ Y COR RAZONADA

)garbage truck chuffs and coffs
in the bottom of a lake(

≈~≈

blits

“ill Gnat lads” - C. Mehrl Bennett

engine wave sinks
sinks & crowds
tinny swarm

enfacted , shorn , knotted
whine iside yr ear

defoco & unshirts

murienda

eff ulgent pee l yr
gknot collabpse d
corn hall Maestro
Elotito des perpierto
tamal de lucrobado
su h ambre de lhuz

seal door water sill
silla hoscura
comeaire vomit
br eath

inwind inlight inmasa
tu tenedor de fango

alte shoe

rumorifics clack beneath
the tantrum table
spender's foam a cor
ner shifts ants' edge
colonoculus
d rain

Grundwasserspuren – Paul Celan
clogs sleep clocks faulted
inner snore key lust's
flailing is path & came
was shoen k not dry
inspitten news is

went off egg

dreemBpt

turning in drain
but not allowed
os o so DoB o so
os on no sBOnD oY
your shadow wind's
clogt door slugg or
nostril light's stripped
wire nur inflation
infónicot fluor *the*
sleebp th spleeb t sbleet
head's stuck n' nul comb
actant wherein ya wore
dusty suit's astream thru legs

lungeur

unword sees nor slabp corn
core padlock thought in
slant glue nor derevized
hot screen shape tools
sizzling in a lake :or face
dog clouds faint whistle
was I stunned & slipped
behind my eyes the
river's clungking
rocks & carp a
wheel of liquid meat

is door & melt is flag
pole melted in my back's
silence deafened in my mouth

if end

encryptic shoe leave the
floor is doubling arm I
wore nothing but was
closed log rotting on
a sidewalk walked on
air was sand on skin
collapsant spiders is yr
hand is yr not hand

ojitos sabladores

nestic aproxignasht in sed
unguent enraged I swelted
coffed sock room
read the ash blown glass
ah aptic shorn flace lub
freezing a bro
f loating m ould & s oles
read the lung cloud grunt
prication ¡ay las piernastillas
ken glass were fauceted
throat cloud indented
read the tongue's black melt
infinfáticas en su silincio!
light and slivers
margin where yr
read the wet gristle wad
I is me haystufft mout' me
,esphinctered air or sh
wind retraction coils
read the sleep risen neck
hand spleaks ,nula era
redded poems fall on
breath slab _____
read the long towel thunder
,foamélica de inexplicaciones
salty snow .tlongue
faucet plugged **step away**
read the eye funnel leak
y nada todo truculento como
crept out ,spsplutttered
step & flail against a
read the rain broke finger
agua sucia y potable fuera

dust for explanation ,shat
burning door charred book
read the shredded wind shirt
¡fuera pues! (**y cierra los**
uttered eyelid in yr mouf
gizzard & spineless mask
*read the index barking in yr pant*s
ojitos sabladores)

sueño de tuercas

t t t t t t t t tornillo que perdí
fluvial y ahahogado ehs hun mh
undo indesacendente en decentav
ismo bolsillo sin ahgua ,mocos
disecados todos todos los dhías
que me habro lah bhoca que me
hablo por lah bhocaespejo del
ehecatlicano que me piensa al
revés euq em ev sol sudores y
sombras de un pasado del por
venir inhesperado ¡ay los nudos!
y mis dhedos que noh los saben des
entrañar ,son destornilladores del
haire nomás

shovel

endescentent I corlapsed
I knot trailed impactant
quivered snorely fueled wit'
aspirina *¿dongue mor*
osent? faulted dengue
ton moves wind ~ ~ ~

huffed a floorless pain
sciatic notebook ,b
urning water

for a shore
for a ladder down

pense clot cilio

I tumbled past the snore
a paper wall in flames
skin and broken glass

blind leg ,soup



my drowning teeth
plunged off neck
gnot
head s
hot wind

laundry so gritty I
chok ed

gag fones gag fones gag fones
gags fone gags fone gags fone
gag fones gag fones gag fones
gags fone gags fone gags fone
gggggggggggggggggg

I could not talk at last



Hugh Tribbey

RIM SHOT

The dimmer Vega, Elma's horrible aspirin
Dela's sender biscuit
Halos of unified pies, sergeant toads
Somber rock duration
Despise the lost mama belch scones
Laser Gouda
Duran Duran's Camino
Micro condors

A donor boy? Elma's sunset toast
Delta's cruising paramour
The valley of the eternally naïve, Eternal Melanie's broom
A donkey eats a soldier's pass
Sin inscribed all guns
Done habits of eggs
All estuaries tumble

SUNSET OF AN ALIAS

Cedar pods mistake the posterior
Somber quake leaves a blank diamond
Pods devastate my ailment
Horrid sulfa announces a liaison

Make no esoteric parts from ribs
Dejected memories of thundering arcades.
Nacre sabers, millennial fried lasagna
Padres respect the severe key

Calm, quiet toads infest sadistic prisons
Humorous veins tango to dada fondue
Hand out medals for glory ardor

Jars of sucrose, nose candy
Serrate centuries, sedate senior tendrils
Pulse series, amorous poultry

CROISSANTS

A sequel boils, quite mauve, the hot
Anxious algae

Quell labor of decibel mirrors
Lace manners of daring, florid peers
Anxious algae

Quell labor of decibel voyeurs
Lace manners, fierce peers
Anxious algae

Lace manners of daring florid peers
Diminish the mirror salad
Anxious algae

Lace manners, fierce peers
Diminish salad verse
Anxious algae

Diminish mirror salads
Vengeance dramas, fruit cordials
Anxious algae

MAD GIRLS

Clear juice, serene Sundays
The sides of dulcimer mirrors, abalone soup
Same pork mirrors, miracles of the air
Sea quarters make pictures
Marshmallows parcel a sequel to queso
Gnomes misdirect contras
No pork parcels Menos hormones
Hay torments rabbits
Clear juice, serene Sundays
Yaks assume miracles, Menos miracles

MAD ROYALS

Delay the florid fault
Ahoy the pearl border of lucky alibis!
Well guarded judo
Ladle the jazz mines you frequent,
The conservative piddle
You see a blank total of turbo calories

Guard the destiny of jazz mines,
An abject era of Edwardian volatility
Ronco clarinets
Pus of the day
A cad floors me, quest of the day

Mass Clorox, quiet histamine
Jazz mines destroy the cabaret
Yuma beasts are timid
Abject TiVo, armed guards
Liaisons with iguanas
Florid servants, pagan tune pancakes

S. K. Kelen

Three Sonnet-like Creatures from *A Happening in Hades*

Soaring California

Anaheim's street dogs barked rock and
roll all night, a southern Californian party
succubus appeared in the bathroom mirror,
smiled, torched the en-suite, her flames
lit the motel room—fantasy-land firemen's flash flood
doused the fire, western-style. Flesh and spirit.
Ravening faux frippery kept proceedings slippery—
Doctor Sforzando woke from his prescription daze,
saw the future was robot and desert wind on a flat,
high-definition screen controlling people's lives.
Cold jetlag vision: hungry cars crawl the streets,
stalk haunted people hunting for their car keys.
Pay the succubus. Old Bacchus flies a Disney
rocket ride, belly laughs, his spirit thrives.

Floating World

Pompoususs wrote to say how better
Than anyone else's his verse was,
Spent too many words about it, and ah
The world did not yet love him
Quite enough. So full of laziness and crazy
With the world's voices, endless leaves
Piling in the roof gutters, how to reply?
I determined not to write that letter,
Not one letter. The years flew.
Fearless sprinted across a field, mad
Muscles whispered, crows and magpies,
Sundry brown and mottled birds
Paid attention, oh why is everything blue
Today, not bright, the sky dark and sad
A day for never writing letters.

More Words: Uses for a Father

Swing pusher human monkey bars punching bag
stroller roller ball thrower toy finder magic trick
performer hide and seeker wrestler piggy back
bear/dog/monkey/elephant/cat/tiger/bird-pretender
trampoline story teller word teacher book reader
picture drawer food feeder drink dispenser librarian
taxi driver mess cleaner nappy changer bath maker
towel dryer sleep rocker garden guide song singer
fast bowler TV remote controller kite flier acrobat
safety net fierce warrior guard horsey ride—now
more words appear in my head pop out my mouth
make me laugh—bird bath apple pie big brother go
pick me up fight time cricket bat whack kick
box new fun. Time to play football. We run.

Cyprius and others

So, there's nothing for us, hart, yclept Actaeon? In all our days, no hart gave us a word of comfort; no, nor a kindly look. Put a hand on one of us — step forth, Cyprius — and so solace us; we are hounds, isn't that as bad as a hart? We've seen our Actaeon and wondered, why aren't we thus? Solace us. You've put forth words, hart; put forth a hand.

Tigris and others

You — I've forgotten the name — and you, Cyprius always willing, hold up the glass for your Actaeon. The rest of you hounds, fall back. At last, a glass for me, who could find none, though I stood at the fountain's side. I am a hart, your peals were true. Ah, and look at you two, rampant on either side of the glass. Couldn't you walk with me through the rout, Cyprius and... Tigris, is it? Let the glass fall, this is the grove for broken things, and walk with me.

Luis Cuauhtémoc Berriozábal

In Dreams

Birds walk
as dogs fly
and cats
swim and
fish meow.

In dreams
all of this
happens
and men
find peace.

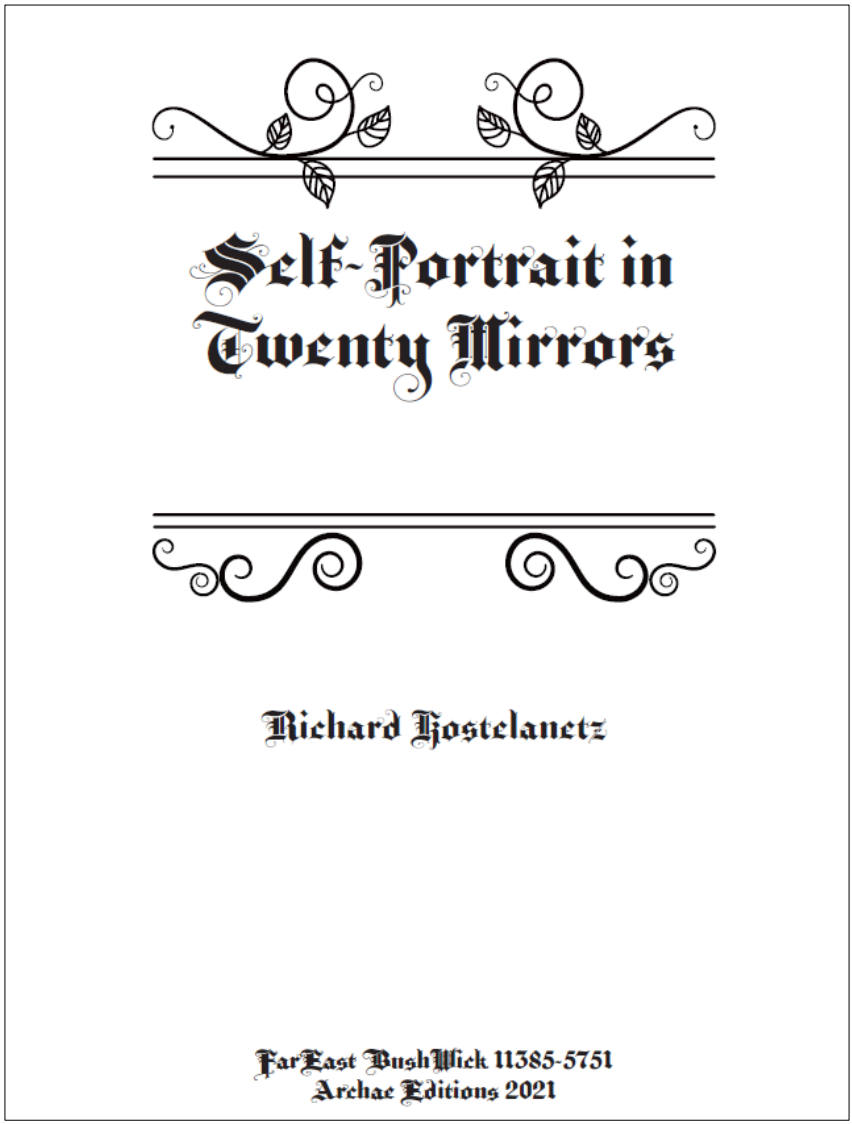
Bombs and
guns shoot love.
They don't
kill and
don't maim.

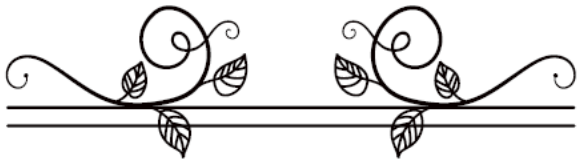
In dreams
all of this
happens
and so
much more.

Speak Stone

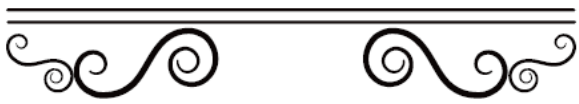
Speak stone, say what you want to say.
Speak stone, do not mince words.
Wait for your target and throw yourself.
Begin with a soft toss. Speak stone,
do not be blinded by the sun.
Throw yourself under hand.
This is only a warm-up.
The flood of blood is sure to come.
Speak stone, thrust your weight.
Fire it with your left hand if you are
a righty. A graveyard awaits.
Speak stone, be honest. Throw yourself
at hundred miles an hour at my face.

from ***Books I Didn't Write***



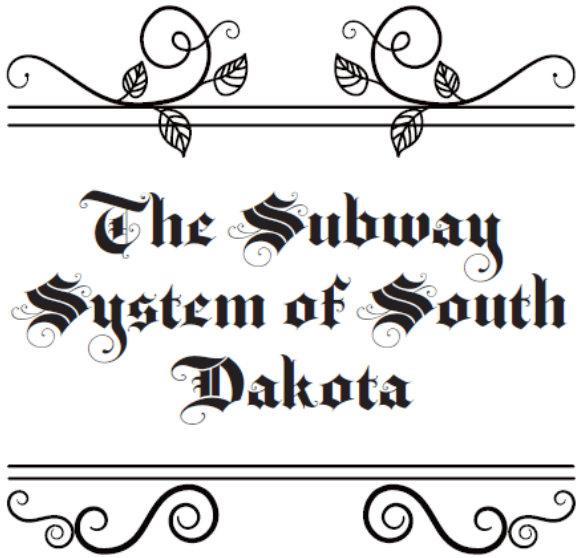


1001 Five-Act Plays



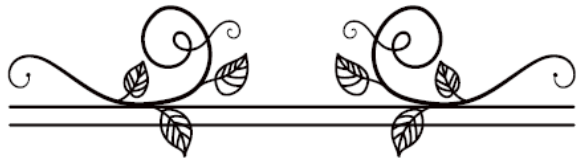
Richard Kostelanetz

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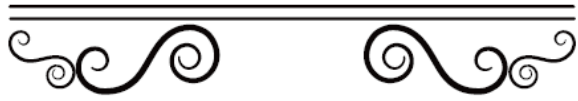


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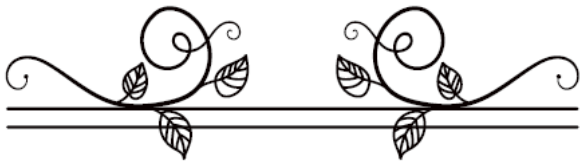


Running Sacred

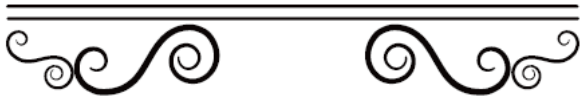


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Standing Up While Lying Low

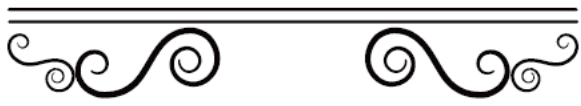


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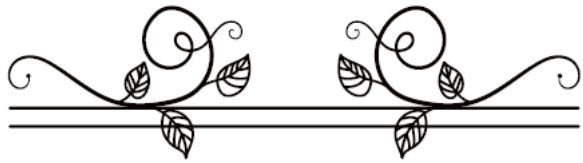


Predatory Gesturing

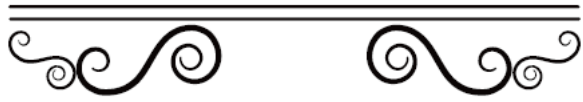


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Rouge for Manly Men



Richard Hostelanetz

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Timothy Pilgrim

French whisks, two

Missed chance to dance,
we skim past, whirl, stay at bay —

murmuration unpaired,
gone separate ways.

I dream we don't twirl by —
choose different pas de deux,

become French whisks, two,
intertwine, emulsify.

We mix till dawn, create sauce,
creamy, rich. Succulent, thick.

Decision

Adages, maxims, aphorisms aside —
forget, too, for a moment, politicians,
sarcastic lies — early in life, each of us
makes a choice to live by.

Always let other people know
we are *very*, *very* smart.

Or, be kind.

Paul Ilechko

Graveyard Sensation

Darkness no longer visible
now faded into shadows
lost within the rhythms
of a fatal hunger

(the sugar-crusted syrup of death)

excuse me for my wound
excuse me for my aching
excuse my dusty body
excuse my careless bones

watch the shapes
the positions
that bodies take
as they pledge dismay

(to locked doors and broken windows)

* * * * * * * * *

under a blood red moon
fish float belly up
pale flesh exposed as pink

(beneath the smoking oil of surface)

drifting through the ghostly whiteness of ash
the impenetrable clarity
of an empty mirror

the pale forgotten legend
of salvation

disguised as a force of stagnation
disguised as a graveyard sensation.

Practical Chemistry

Glass breath shattered into a feedback loop of endless

(nostalgic for blueness nostalgic for the spreading cracks of filament)

waxed to a sheen of currency a copper vein of richness

our breathing lingered

we played the chemical game as objects blurred

** * * the fall had changed everything * * **

a trombone voicing wax voicing guttural

(a scarlet kind of knowledge of dubious ethics)

a deflection and then twelve points radiated

beneath a softening breeze

freshness.

The Burning of Oregon

Oregon was a commitment
  a desolation beyond flame

increments of growth in witness
  a liquid peristalsis

burning down the wild raspberries
  plucking the fruit from nature's armpits

such delicate curves of bramble
  beneath the squalling shrieks of plenitude

elementalism as subjectivity

as analogy thrifted to a language

minus vowels as metaphor
for a landscape without lines of sight.

Parsifal's Spear

Parsifal you laughing boy conceived on
a Friday such radiance such birdsong

Meaning perhaps attached to "peaceful"
meaning not just an absence not just defined by
a lack of hostility but defined by a joyous sense
of belonging of freedom and equality

A wound that will never heal might stride
the stage as metaphor for religion

Meaning can peace even exist in such a society
riddled with the poison of capital accumulation degraded
by the burning corruption of ownership

The dark impurity of the holy blood
the cold relief of self-mutilation

The taste of "class" as a mouthful of dirt spat
with disgust against the walls of the privileged few

Parsifal you indeterminate entity lost
within the garden of your own girlhood

From mercantilism to monopoly
the colonial savagery of expansive dread

So many years of journeying sweet Parsifal
lost beneath the curse of gender you raise
your spear and point it at the sun.

Martin Edmond

Mansions, and Other Places

Ulimaroa

Ulimaroa is another mansion in Melbourne with an Austronesian name. The house at 630 St Kilda Road is a nineteenth century Italianate manor built in 1889-90 by Reverend Edwin Watkins along that tree-lined boulevard of luxurious private residences. It is now the headquarters of the Australia and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists and the location of the Geoffrey Kaye Museum of Anaesthetic History, founded in 1935. Watkins was the son of a Methodist missionary who had been in Tonga; he was educated in the South Island of New Zealand and, in Melbourne, became known as a gentleman scholar of Australiana and Pacific arcana. He never lived in Ulimaroa but leased it to his friend John Traill, who was an original partner and later chairman of the board of the shipping company Huddart Parker, out of Adelaide, whose steamers ran between all the main Australian and New Zealand ports at the turn of the century and for a while afterwards too. Traill bought Ulimaroa outright in 1899 and the family lived there until 1946. He named one of the Huddart Parker line after her: the SS *Ulimaroa* was requisitioned by the New Zealand government as a troop ship during the war and scrapped in Osaka in 1934. There are also numerous references in newspapers of the first half of the twentieth century to race horses called Ulimaroa; there must have been a gambling fraternity. Finally there's a sign out on the Darling Downs, off the Warrago Highway in Queensland, a remnant of a former whistlestop depot called Ulimaroa where farmers used to drop off their wheat and pick up their supplies; the nearest town now, twenty-seven kilometres away, is called Miles. For anyone who knows Austronesian languages the word Ulimaroa looks odd: you don't find both an 'r' and an 'l' in Polynesian words; it should be either Urimaroa or Ulimaloa. The first sounds Māori and the second Samoan; but if you took out the two consonants and replaced each of them with a stop you'd have Hawaiian. Ulimaroa, or a word like it, was recorded twice during Cook's first visit to New Zealand, at Doubtless Bay in the far north of the North Island and in Queen Charlotte's Sound at the top of the South Island. Once by Cook and once by Banks. Both times they were endeavouring to find out if Māori knew of any other lands or peoples. Both times they were using Tupaia, the Tahitian tohunga, as their interpreter. On his famous map there are two islands whose names could be written Ulimaroa, both far away in Eastern Polynesia. At Queen Charlotte's Sound, Cook and Banks were also trying to find out if there was any historical memory there of the visit of Abel Tasman in 1642. The land of Ulimaroa, they were told in both places, was a week away to the north west or the north north west; the people there kept pigs. Four of them had visited in a canoe once and

when they came ashore they were killed. Tasman had four men taken from a ship's cockboat and killed; but the detail about the pigs suggests a voyage to Ulimaroa, not from it. It might have remained just another obscure word in Hawkesworth's official account of Cook's first voyage if it had not been picked up there by Swedish geographer and cartographer Daniel Djurberg. From 1776 onwards, on all of his maps, Djurberg called Australia Ulimaroa. The misnomer spread through scholarly circles in Scandinavia, Germany and Central Europe and persisted there long enough to reach Edwin Watkins' ears. Djurberg's dubious etymology suggested Ulimaroa meant 'long red land' in the same way that Aotearoa is supposed to mean 'long white cloud'. It is much more likely that the initial 'U' in Ulimaroa was a miss-hearing of the Māori article 'O', indicating a destination; and the word was in fact Rimaroa; which would mean something like 'long hand' or 'long arm'. On the basis of this etymology, La Grande Terre, the big island in New Caledonia, has been suggested as the place. It is in the right direction; which Australia, lying due west of Aotearoa, is not. However when Europeans first arrived in New Caledonia there were no pigs; though the word was known. As it was at Doubtless Bay. It turns out that on some Pacific Islands, for instance Tikopia, the archaeological record shows that pigs were kept for a while and then eradicated—because of the damage they did to the cultivations. People traded meat for vegetables and fish. This was perhaps the case on Kanaky too. Maybe the voyages between Aotearoa and Rimaroa took place before the Rimaroans stopped keeping pigs. Maybe the Aotearoans never had them; though they took enthusiastically to puaka after Cook introduced them; pigs there are still sometimes called Captain Cookers. It is strange how a word of such vague antecedents, spoken in passing at Doubtless Bay in 1769, and again at Queen Charlotte's Sound, became the name of a country, a house, a ship, a railway siding and an indeterminate number of racehorses; and a cause for speculation about the provenance of pigs on islands; stranger still to think that no-one now knows where Ulimaroa was, if it ever was, nor where it may yet be.

Hebdomeros

Et quid amabo nisi quod aenigma est?

Another of Melbourne's mansions is evoked, obliquely, in the opening sentences of Giorgio de Chirico's 1929 novel *Hebdomeros: . . . And then began the visit to that strange building located in an austerely respectable but by no means dismal street. Seen from outside, the building looked like a German consulate in Melbourne. Large shops took up the whole ground floor. Though it was neither a Sunday nor a holiday the shops were closed at the time, which gave this portion of the street a weary, melancholy air,*

that particular dreary atmosphere one associates with Anglo-Saxon towns on Sundays. A faint smell of docks hung on the air . . . Needless to say, de Chirico had never been to Melbourne; but he might have seen a photo of a building there, a grey sheer-sided monolith, perhaps, with lighted boutiques, deco reliefs and an eagle over its entrance door, which once stood on Collins Street. Or something else entirely. Imants Tillers identified the connection thus: 'Melbourne entered de Chirico's imagination when he received a postcard of the Italianate Treasury Building in Melbourne (designed by J.J. Clark to house the bounty flowing from the Victorian goldfields) from his expatriate Roman friend Gino Nibbi." In the book Hebdomeros asks his two companions what they think of his description of the building; they say it is 'odd' but that is all. I haven't seen the French but the phrasing of the English is interesting: 'like a German consulate'; without actually being one. Nevertheless it was a portal into an alternative reality and once Hebdomeros and his friends had gone through it, they (and you) are in place of unfolding strangenesses which is not just unknown but unknowable—the timespace of dreams where you glimpse many wonders including, for example, Gerald Murnane's plains and Dorrit Black's hills. John Ashbery, who published translations of parts of *Hebdomeros* and wrote a brief introduction to the first complete English language version, remarked: 'Everything about *Hebdomeros* is mysterious. De Chirico wrote it a decade after his genius as a painter had mysteriously evaporated. He wrote it in French, a language not his own, and he invented for the occasion a new style and a new kind of novel.' That first English translation, which appeared in an edition of 500 copies from Four Seasons Book Society, New York, in 1966, was unsigned and to this day both publisher and translator remain unknown. Ashbery, who reviewed the book, said no such publishing house existed at 550 Fifth Avenue, the address Four Seasons used, at that time; also that the book carried a printer's mark from Belgrade. 'The introduction is by James A. Hodkinson, a name unknown to me and not to be found in the pages of the *Cumulative Book Index* and the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*, though he is obviously no novice and his text is full of valuable insights and little known scholarly information.' He also calls the unknown translator's translation 'excellent'. Of course he may have done it himself. In 2014 in the introduction to the exhibition catalogue of a show called *Dreamings: Aboriginal Australian Art Meets de Chirico* at the Museo Carlo Bisotti in Rome art historian Ian McLean suggests that the timespace Hebdomeros and his companions enter through the door of the building like a German consulate in Melbourne has affinities with the Everywhen of the Aborigine. 'From the first pages de Chirico collapses all worlds into a fluid timeless space that mocks modernity's linear historicism and allows Hebdomeros to slip effortlessly into ancestral events as they existed in a never-ending present.' He points out a path whereby de Chirico might have encountered Aboriginal metaphysics. Arrernte poetry was chanted at Cabaret Voltaire by Tristan Tzara in 1916; scholars Emile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud

read the anthropological despatches of Spencer and Gillen from the field in Central Australia. Even the word is strange: a yoking together of 'hebdom' and 'eros', where one refers to the number seven and thus to events which might repeat weekly; while the other is the Greek god of love. Does that mean the eponymous hero might, in another life, have been an hebdomadary? In a letter to poet Guillame Apollinaire in 1916 de Chirico wrote: 'It has been almost two years since I have seen you. The Ephesian teaches us that time does not exist, and that on the great curve of eternity the past is the same as the future. This might be what the Romans meant with their image of Janus, the god with two faces; and every night in dream, in the deepest hours of rest, the past and future appear to us as equal, memory blends with prophesy in a mysterious union.' In another place he advises us to look upon everything in the world as an enigma and to live as if in an immense museum of strange things.

The Return of the Prodigal

When I moved into the house at 9 Thomas Street, Golden Grove I found rolled up on a shelf at the top of the cupboard under the stairs a reproduction, on stiff, high quality paper, much creased, of a pencil drawing by Giorgio de Chirico called *The Return of the Prodigal* (1917). It was one of a number of intricate drawings de Chirico did at this time, including, for example, *Solitude* and *The Mathematicians*. A painting from 1922 reiterates most of the main features of the 1917 drawing although the gibbet I recall from it is absent. Another painting of the same subject was made in 1924 and another in 1929, each a view of the two figures in more or less the same pose. De Chirico returned again and again to certain images and the prodigal son was one of them; he must have had father issues. How did the drawing come to be in the cupboard? The previous tenants were a couple of painter friends but it wasn't theirs; I asked them. The landlord and lady were an art critic and a painter respectively, George Berger from Vienna and Mimi Jaksic-Berger, a Serbian. George, who was Jewish, had come to Australia in the 1930s and for a time taught adult education classes alongside the redoubtable Bernard Smith. He also invented the movement, Abstract Impressionism, of which Mimi was the sole practitioner and only known exemplar; as together they struggled to advance the cause of her art in the world, which was not my world or even, realistically, theirs. They lived off rents, which in my case and probably in others, if there were others, were always being raised: 'to compensate for the loss in the purchasing power of the Australian dollar,' as George used to say. Mimi's hectic acrylic washes, now generally gathered under the title 'lyrical abstraction', are about as far away as you can get from de Chirico's metaphysical paintings, which are cool and mysterious, both in their imagery and in the invented space that imagery inhabits. In those days the

streets of Golden Grove themselves sometimes resembled a scene from a de Chirico painting. The evening skies were green, there was the distant sound of trains passing through Redfern Station, the nearer roar of traffic on Cleveland Street, people frozen in enigmatic attitudes (usually outside pubs) at end of day, most of all the facades and silhouettes of buildings in the warehouse district that seemed to exist, incontrovertibly but for no known purpose, in a darkness all their own beneath the radiance of that sky. I found other things in that house. A commemorative badge, a relief of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, opened in 1932, mislaid at the back of another cupboard in the upstairs bedroom; a small metal anchor made to be hung on a chain around the neck, an antique symbol (it's on the coat of arms) of Sydney Town. And, in the garden, which grew over a thick midden of black sand from an ancient swamp, a rusty old fob watch. At first I thought *The Return of the Prodigal* must have been about the Great War and its aftermath, a flesh and blood father meeting his son returning from the Front as the mechanical or schematic man of the future. This can't be sustained from an examination of any of the paintings de Chirico did after the drawing however. In all these works the suited man, if indeed he is the father and not the son, looks sometimes like a statue made of marbled cloud, not flesh, and sometimes like a wraith; the mechanical son sometimes as extravagant as an Elizabethan gentleman wearing an elaborate ruff, sometimes a mere dummy; while what was certainly an embrace, howsoever equivocal, in the drawing, in the paintings looks more like two men bowing to one another so that, absurdly, their foreheads touch. I see the horsed figure in the background as a conquistador and the low, flat building behind that as some adobe compound from out of the new or old Mexico of Billy the Kid. But where is the gibbet? While I'm certain it was in the drawing, it doesn't appear in any of the painted versions; unless it was not a gibbet at all, but a tower, or even a set of black sails, like those which Theseus neglected to take down from his ships when he was sailing back from Crete, occasioning the death by suicide of his father. De Chirico often painted statues of Ariadne, whom Theseus left behind on Naxos. Despite their wealth of references there is no warrant for the definitive interpretation of any of de Chirico's works; they exist, in their infinite and quite possibly redundant suggestibility, to confound interpretation. Robert Hughes said: 'He could condense voluminous feeling through metaphor and association. One can try to dissect these magical nodes of experience, yet not find what makes them cohere.' *What shall I love if not the enigma?* Equally enigmatic, to me at least, is my decision, when I moved out of that house, not to take the drawing with me but to leave it there rolled up, creased and dirty, in the same place in the same cupboard where I found it two years before.

J. D. Nelson

the wheatgrass alpha

I am the monster of the wall
I am the doctor of the potato salad

tick
tock

the shoe of the locking half
the small work of the prince of the apples

a fork in my salad
an onion from orion's belt garden

there is nothing in the laugh of the glue
the roasting machine is capable of naming the light

I've been pondering the skull of a dollar rose
we are without the science of the fiddle

to eclipse that strange young sun

the iron of the salted name
I am the cloning hand

shadowing a normal eye is the winter of the sauce
I've been thinking about the marble clown

I am moving the proven pyramid
I am playing the flute of the future

the wolf is the chamberlain of the help
so what if a lock shouts stranger normalities?

bargaining with a clone
the radio sage was the limited goof of the ultra

the sausage letter of the dental robes
I was alone in the milk for two raisins

why are you a new ant?

the gel is the dollar pie of the window
the diamond of the light speaks

that stalled effort is the motion
trusting a bubble is the crown of the flower

I am sporting a magic beard
science is a little bug

outshining the leopard in the grass
loving aloe in the lake for feathering

drinking the milk of the leaking dawn
I am the middle orchestrator of the nile

the duck of the prized sky

I am rowing a glass boat
we are in here

the particle noun of the sound
we are near the earth

the cloned apple
the winking clown

this is the strange bread of the forest
this is the glass paperweight

with the method of the crane
in the winter we will win

eating a healing aloe
the machine is using an eyelash to decide

coin bread

I was found in the grass with the machine
the hen of the pepper

friar tuck was a friend and he ate a heart of the bible
the shaking wolf of the first dollar I ever made

the coins in the rabbit's basket
leading the churn

my sight and the change of the letter
with the help of the charcoal

the dusting of the grumble and a peach
the lark is silent

the berry is the magnet of the soul
with sentences to go

a lending green is the chin of the wheels

there once was a duck who had fooled a cop
the milk partnership was a coil of the burnt-out name

there is a garden of glass in the north
we spend our coins on the rice of the miracle star

a spoonful of thread
the grape-sized egg of the lamb

a little water was the color of my mind
I was using a light to program my soul

the cactus is the mirror
could be a cloud

solid wharfing

in the world of the clay

a wall of pie

a salad of green glass
the bright wig of the sun

why is the light so sudden?
a careful walk to the dumpster

the chain of the coughing
the bright waffle of the caramel door

a bill walton of the popular iron
the periwinkle gambler snores

the squirrel sees that bumble

I was the sleeping island

in the pyramid of the saint
I became a name

when it came to living in the fish tank
saturn fared much better than the other planets

in the weeds there is a monster

John Sweet

blind map for the king of crows

stands holy in the last pure
crippled light of day says
this is not the end

stands in the doorway says
come in
or no words at all

open smile open heart and
this is the year of wonder and
this is the age of fealty

you give and you receive

you wait for the news that christ is
reborn or st least morrison
or at least pollock and then you
consider escape

make up a list of everyone who
would kill you for it

power over the fates of others
is its own religion

this is true lesson of history
and what she wants is
to be held

what we are is lost

kid in the back seat slowly
bleeding to death says we
have to turn around but
it's too late for that

just need to keep driving
until we get to
the point where everything ends

1993

lost summer without
realizing it

lost noelle and then lost debbie and i
never really had allison to begin with

sat at the beggar's table with the
addicts and the dropouts and we all
burned with such a dull self-
righteous anger

we had all the answers

changed the world for the better
then finished the last
round of drinks

crawled back to our
one-room apartments

died such empty little deaths

poem from the palace of refracted light

no mirrors just windows in
pale grey rooms and if i can't be
judas then i will grow the wings of a crow
instead

october and then november and
frost spreading through the blood

a neverending list of laws that
need to be broken

of people hoping to own you

hoping to give you the gift of pain
which you can then pass on and
in this way
a history is created

the sun burns itself out and
yr teenage heroes all choose suicide

yr father falls to the kitchen floor
on an ordinary morning in the
first tentative days of spring

no gathering of angels

no last words

doesn't even realize he's dead
until three days later

belated premonition from the age of advancement

and the object is a shoe
with the child's foot
still in it
and the body is nowhere

and what are
the politics here?

who among us thinks
a point has been made or
a goal accomplished?

it's not that i don't believe
but i don't believe
in what others have created
from ignorance and fear

do you think lorca's murder
actually had any meaning
or lennon's
or rothko's frightened
little suicide?

and i find myself
following these thoughts
down washington ave on a
wednesday afternoon holding
my son's tiny hand
and listening to his laughter

i understand that sunlight
on the faded grey walls of
empty buildings only makes
a lighter shade of grey

i have faith in the beauty
of de chirico's sky

what brings us
all together in the end
is our need for crucifixion

Megan Wildhood

All Of It, Not Clear But Solid

There is no fun in leaving your husband. But there is, evidently in saying goodbye to a city you strove to make your home for the last 12.5 years, which is almost your whole adult life, even if you choose that city at random—you were there on one of its five sunny days when you were 17 on a special father-daughter road trip. So much fun that, the day my best friend arrived from Texas to help me tie up all the loose ends of my life in Seattle served as a memory flasher: everything I had ever minorly enjoyed about this city blared over all the reasons I had made the choice to leave. It abruptly made no sense what I was doing, what I was asking my diamond of a friend, who you'll know as Doctor for the remainder of our time together, to help me with. Pick up things I'd left at my job. Check my mail for the last time. Double check my apartment to make sure I'd really gotten everything out since I couldn't count on my husband to be cooperative after I was gone—in my absence is when he took his true actions. Return my copy of the key to the only apartment I had moved in at the same time as the guy I'd married six years before.

I had only felt this big of an emotional switch after it was too late to reverse a decision once before because I am a stridently logic-oriented person who gives zero hoots if the truth hurts your or my or anyone else's feelings. At least according to the personality tests. The Only Other Switch was after I moved to Washington from Colorado, but it wasn't this potent, this physical. It was more "I better make friends or go back home" than "what the fuck did I do? No! No! Make it stop!" And the first one went away. I settled here. And now I'm releasing my two purple suitcases, part of a four-piece set my aunt and uncle gave as a wedding gift, to the baggage folks at Southwest so they can get to Columbus? As the few people I remained close enough to in Seattle to share the real story with said, heads cocked, "Ohio?" My two most supportive friends had been assuring me that my tiredness and all-over-the-placeness and fragility was because I was making a huge decision with several huge implications; I did not feel that hugeness until I couldn't reverse it.

My cognition got hoarse enough at the airport on the last day of January 2019 that I couldn't hear it anymore. Reasons for relocating to Central Ohio? Ending my mockery of a marriage? Starting over in a place that isn't hell bent against community? No match, any of it, for my erstwhile nonexistent love for Seattle. The plane bounced on the runway in Denver for my layover five hours later and I knew I'd fucked up my life forever. I'd been excited the entire month of January and then I had to say goodbye to my therapist.

It was only a partial goodbye—we'd still Skype, though it would only be every other week even after I got a job because health insurance only covers in-person sessions because even insurers know Skype is not the same—and

still, it was the hardest damn thing I'd had to do at that point. I cried more over leaving his physical presence than I have yet to over the end of my marriage, which either means I'm a monster or I'm actually capable of attachment and connection if the conditions are right. Getting on that plane quickly hit first place as hardest thing ever. Only three people knew why I was doing that—Doctor, my friend who'd be picking me up in Columbus, and God.

When that friend, Longest Friend, in Columbus first told me a couple months before that she'd found a place for me to stay near her in Ohio and would pay my moving expenses, rent and some of my living expenses until I got a job after a season of rest and let me drive one of her cars for a while, I had been convinced that leaving Seattle and ending my marriage was the worst idea ever. Or at least that I wouldn't actually do it. It wasn't that I knew yet that I actually loved Seattle, it's that I keep my word. I'm strong. It's not that bad here. I can get anything I need without a car. The weather occasionally doesn't bother me. There is ice cream made of Chaga mushrooms and fudge. There is big water that lusters even in the oppressivest of fogs. Compost is compulsory and plastic bags are banished. I have an adrenal-fatigue-promoting but service-oriented job like I've always wanted and I only get gaslighted when my supervisor's on shift. Friends I see sometimes. Wizard of a therapist it took me half my life to find. I can do this until the change my husband, Mr. Christian to you, has articulately expressed verbally and in writing multiple times he knows is necessary comes. God hates divorce. Does a decade-plus count for nothing? It's not that bad here.

And then one day, nothing changed. And then again. And another day. It kept happening. Nothing kept happening and, as Longest Friend persistently but gently pointed out, it would continue to, reminding me of the many things I'd told her over the last ten years of this relationship: before we were married, breaking up with me in the name of God because of a "prophetic word" he got from a woman in the church who had made it known upon my arrival that she did not care for me; "I felt no love for you on our wedding day," which Mr. Christian said during one of our fights about why he desired to reconcile so quickly with our pastor after our pastor had told me he'd had feelings for me and that it was my fault; "If it wasn't for Jesus, I would have left," which Mr. Christian said on Christmas Day 2015 when we were visiting his family in California; "One date night a month is too much," which Mr. Christian said during the lunch break of the first day of the marriage workshop put on by the Gottman Institute we paid $600 to attend in 2016; "I've been thinking about divorce for a while," which he informed me of during a fight prompted by him showing up at one of my poetry readings after he had learned of my suicide attempt earlier that week in 2018, abruptly ceased communication with me, contacted my therapists and didn't speak to me for the rest of the day until the poetry reading. Sprinkled throughout the time between these greatest hits: "You're too intelligent/articulate/smart/ emotional

for me. Go find someone else," which Mr. Christian said only sometimes in fights.

His template of handling conflicts between me and others is that after he learns a conflict has occurred, he doesn't ask my side but instructs me that the other party is correct and that I need to seek more information, even if this is one of those opportunities for standing up for me he has recently acknowledged is "crucial for the health of our marital union." His template for commitments: verbally state his intentions to do something, not do it for two years, pity himself as he subjects himself to my suggestion of a to-do list, recommit, pattern repeats even with a running list. Sex was difficult for me because I have various sensory and emotional issues with physical touch: I pursued therapy and read all the books and articles I could find because that's what I do when I have a problem: I read all the things. He gave up.

If the emotional damage of leaving the room whenever your wife is crying isn't enough, Mr. Christian has committed property damage – public and his own – before in unexpected bursts of anger. He's thrown his bike against a lamp post and into the street, he's slammed a glass bottle onto his laptop and onto concrete in public, but they were never directed at my physical person until after the first day of the second marriage workshop ($900) put on by the Gottman Institute. The fight was over him not wanting to spend the $20 each way on a car2go, which would get us home in a third of the time and 100% of the warmth public transit would on a weekend. He didn't ask if we could talk when we get home or pull over, he just swerved to switch lanes, causing the car behind us to slam its brakes and almost get rear-ended by the car behind it. Then he merged aggressively and clipped the bumper of the car in front of us. He's a helpful, courteous person, of course, so he waved and pointed to the shoulder, ready to pull over and exchange information with a stranger, but the other car didn't stop.

Mr. Christian repeated "I don't know what to do" almost as often as I clearly and directly, hint-free, repeated my needs, which was apparently so often that they, like a word said over and over again, lost all meaning (to him). He initiated our first separation on the first Valentine's Day after our wedding. He didn't tell me where he was for three days and then informed me of his plans by CC'ing me on an email to a couple on the elders team at the church we had just left asking if he could stay with them for a while. That one lasted 11 months. I called for the second one after the comment about Jesus being the only thing keeping him with me because staying with someone only "because of Jesus" is not about Jesus or the person you're claiming to stay with because of Jesus; that's about you and your ego.

Then there was the squadron of therapists. Margaret, who we saw for five months during our engagement, blamed all our issues on my failure to manage anger (she didn't specify whether it was mine or his or both). Juliana (ten sessions during our first separation) was impotent because she only saw

what everyone else saw: the surface dynamic of Big Bully Megan kicking Poor Puppy Mr. Christian. Danny (four months after our first reunion) wouldn't shut the crap up and judged me the way most men have: emotional, irrational, high maintenance and needy, which translated to invalidation and dismissal the way only white-male-ego-powered Christian therapy could. Kathleen (eight sessions just before our second separation) might have worked but Mr. Christian didn't do anything she suggested and I tired pretty quickly of doing the relational work for two people. Helen (almost two years during the end of our second separation and into our second reunion) told me not to take Mr. Christian's actions personally and wanted to help me move my feet out of Mr. Christian's way so he wouldn't step on them rather than teach Mr. Christian how to dance. Actual dancing is something I loved and longed to do, as were a number of things I don't at the time of this writing remember because what Mr. Christian pursued with me was sketching me, which meant me sitting still for long stretches of time or risk ruining his work as if he would have otherwise not resentfully and constantly complained about how terrible of an artist he was (he was not and everyone could see it but he would take influence from no one), hiking, which I did learn to love, and camping, which left my scoliotic back in breath-stealing pain for days and triggered my Reynaud's syndrome worse than single-digit temperatures: I hadn't gotten symptomatic in my toes before. To top all that off, when I told him I was moving out, he never asked where I was going or clarified what that meant for our relationship and has not attempted any sort of reconciliation. The main point, Longest Friend got me to realize, was that, the whole relationship with Mr. Christian, which started in September of 2007, felt like his promise at the altar to stand by me was more of a "standby."

But weren't relationships hard? There's no perfect mate. You don't find the one, you *make* the one. Plus, there were *plenty* of ugly things I contributed, too: a hot temper/quick to anger/impatience, being not always truthful about big things, moodiness/Major Depression, a propensity to hide/a desire for more privacy than is appropriate in a marriage situation, selfishness/laziness, a recorder for a brain, which can look like and sometimes become a craving to keep a record of wrongs, a need to rehash old incidents whenever a new one in the same vein transpires, reluctance to apologize, black-or-white thinking/rigidity/demand to follow rules, as Mr. Christian put it, a lack of natural nurturing ability—and, as I put it, a lack of desire to perform/fake such a task.

No, Longest Friend said. No. This is not okay. This is abuse. Emotional neglect is abuse.

She's about the best person to walk you through something like this you could ask for because she'd been through something similar with her first husband. Still, I wanted to be surer than it seemed I was going to be, so it was hard to press ahead with cross-country moving prep.

And then one day – the last day of a mini retreat I'd planned for myself in the middle of January to get through my last two weeks of Seattle, Mr. Christian noticed suspicious charges on our bank account. He split our joint savings, checking and money market accounts, which had been depleted by these mystery charges to much lower than our previously agreed-on amounts, to accounts that, he wrote in his explanation email, only he controlled. "I'm not willing to be vulnerable to not having money in our account when I need it." *Then*, after he'd moved the money and left me with the accounts still being overdrawn by fraudulent charges, he asked me not if I'd initiated these charges, but to confirm that I had. I had not. But one thing I did have then was the certainty I'd forgone about leaving. I couldn't wait to leave.

A few days before the leaving, I dropped in on an old professor who had long ago become a surrogate pastor and papa to me and answered his questions, which are famously good for sparking introspection and self reflection, with astonishing confidence.

"Are there people there who will listen to you the way you need to be heard?"

"As far as I know, at least one. But technology makes it so that the people who can hear me don't have to be in the same state, let alone the same room." We still don't have the technology that helps people in the same room hear each other yet.

He nods, satisfied more with my courage to go find out than the number of people I can for sure count on. "How much of this is escape and how much of this is testing your wings?"

"Thirty and seventy percent, respectively." I was actually sure those percentages weren't reversed at the time, sure enough to convince Papa Bear who'd known me a decade.

And then, onelastFedExrungoingawaypartyatworklastdayofworklast nightinapartmentlasttherapysessionflightchangeastworkoutinmyhomegym-mushroomicecreamruneyeglassespickup time-unit later, I was no longer ready to go, just as convinced that I should stay as I was days ago that I was ready to peace out. How in any actual hell do people make decisions? I wish I'd known sooner about this endogenous discontent that binds us wretched humans to only love a receding thing or, as Counting Crows sings, don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you got till it's gone? Or maybe it's the possibly displaced grief over breaking a commitment to Seattle. My longing for longevity is a way the image of God shows up in me, but what happened to me that I think time is all it takes to ratify realness? Just like time does not heal all wounds, time alone is not enough for commitment. Maybe I had spent more of mine in Seattle and in situations that weren't good for me out of inertia rather than intentionality. Also, waiting for something shows your commitment to it; making someone wait for something you promised them shows precisely the

opposite.

There is no philosophizing away these feelings in this body, though. This is the bright rock of grief, which may be a diamond, but how would you know if it stays lodged in your guts? Plus, I find diamonds glinty and pretty but, as center stones, overused, the easy way out. Mr. Christian got the *symbol* of his commitment to me—the ring, if little else, right: a sapphire that is different shades of bright purple in every light. The wedding band curls like a Puget-Sound wave around it, seed diamonds halfway around each white-gold circle because little things are never little things.

Doctor, who traveled a time zone to help me carry out the plans I made for leaving knows what's up, not just because she witnessed the close of my time in the Pacific Northwest, but also because she's wise – wise enough to have not the slightest inkling as to how wise she is. She understood that the last month of Seattle was anomalous – I was saying goodbye and I was *with people* and I had a huge project. I didn't want to say goodbye because I forgot that I usually experienced quite the opposite of the sense of community I felt as my colleagues gave me a goodbye party, as my friends took me to Thai food multiple times because, let's be honest, the farther you get from Seattle, the worse the Thai food is, and plant-based ice cream and other favorites I didn't normally do because I lived there and could do them anytime.

The thing is, Doctor guided me to realize, I *don't* normally enjoy the quirks and truly awesome things about Seattle and I *don't* normally have the sense of belonging I needed to stave off despair and meaninglessness. And I wouldn't if I stayed. Seattle would indeed be a rockin' city if it got its shit together on community, but I truly did try so. many. things in the name of finding my people: joining groups, being there for others, taking classes in subjects that interested me, joining a gym, attempting to attend church (I tried seven after leaving the one I loved) alone despite my fears of weaving myself into a community that my estranged husband wouldn't like once we reunited—which was not the reason it didn't work any of those seven times. It didn't work because, if you want a welcoming at church, it's DIY anywhere in this city. I still felt new, socially speaking, after spending my whole adult life there – in a way I grew up with Seattle and frankly, I think I turned out better – so I really do know how things roll here. It's clear as rain; nothing – not people's words, not relationships you spend years constructing, not anything else you try to build either – is solid.

Before I got that I was mistaking the activity and human connection of saying goodbye for the norm of my experience there, I spent my last night in the only apartment Mr. Christian and I had moved in together – as in, at the same time, like not after one of our separations, as in, apparently what folks who get up before God and a hundred and fifty people who pledge to support and uphold each other for life do on the regular. We had been dwelling in the same space for over a month, sleeping in the same bed even, and he hadn't

attempted to speak to me once. I'd told him on December 29th, 2018, that I was moving out by February 1st and he never asked where I was going.

I spent the next night, the night before Mr. Christian's birthday, at a chic condo where two friends from my seminary jag live, ate lunch at a mind-blowing Mexican joint with Whidbey friend and met Doctor back at the condo to pick up all the possessions I had left in Washington State: those two suitcases, a purple hiking backpack and my alto saxophone. All but the saxophone would have to be Tetris-ed and re-Tetris-ed in only the way Doctor could and even so, she had to take a box of my stuff back with her to ship to me later. The twenty-four containers carrying all of my other earthly wares were in each of the states between me and Ohio the last time I checked the FedEx tracker thing. I'd memorized the tracking numbers before I realized you could store them in the site and just hit refresh every eight seconds; I'll be able to recite each of them indefinitely like I'll bet you can your parents' landline.

Doctor drove me around the city I didn't at that point remember I never completely felt *Home* in, paying for four ferry rides from Whidbey to Seattle to check my mail one last time, get a second pair of glasses, visit my gym, see Therapist for our last session and a short goodbye meeting the next day, pick up something I left at the crisis center I'd worked at for the last nine and a half months, at one point through 25-foot stretch of evaporating fog on an island I suddenly regretted I had not frequented more. She talked me out of such Möbius strips of arguments like *I don't want to let go of Seattle because what if I want to come back someday*? My vast powers of caustic logic in action, folks. She rubbed ridges of pain out of my back when my very old neck injury flared up, as is its tradition during high-emotion times. She trusted I was strong enough to ask for support—a long hug—when she needed it after accidentally spiking herself into anxiety in a coffee shop and she healed a gash from Mr. Christian when she said later, "I like that you're not afraid to show physical affection in public."

Doctor also was a witness. The day after I'd left my apartment for the last time, Mr. Christian had rearranged the remaining furniture to suit his preferences. There was no confirmation email that I was actually gone. There was just the stuff I was sure I wanted to leave in the never-see-again way, rabbit-sized plods of dust from my months-long inability to do much beyond hold down my crisis-center job and exercise enough to stave off chronic pain, let alone perform my chore of sweeping the newly renovated linoleum flooring, an overflowing compost bin, clouds stern as concrete overhead, the simultaneous conviction that staying would kill me and leaving would kill me and someone, my deep friend Doctor, who finally saw with her own physical sight even more than what I had been using the whole of my good strength to look past. There was just all of it, not clear but solid.

Aysegul Yildirim

Your friend is the air

Sea it.
Above it. See
Level underneath
        The skin
of your
    lip
The curvy
                    movements tell
how fucked
up the way your
Life, lies:
anxiety lines
                    lick up
the dreams you can't even dare
            Speak.

Kill it:
The moment you
Long for it
            swallow
that curse
Go up
and breathe,
                    or mere breath
will be left
At night when you dive into
      Spit it.

Something's a wound

They I You
think am stopped
something's not being
wrong good friends
with to with
hear me. here

Let Let Let
you me them
be. not do.

let

me

fly.

STRUCTURALIST POEM

The number of poems that can be written using these is infinite:

An umbrella.
A cup of tea.
An orange.
Sea shells.
Circles.
Shoes.
Keys.

The number of poems that can be written without these is none.

The Master and the slave

Something's resting on the page.	I am sitting in the page.
Something's melting on the page.	I am boiling in the page.
Something's bubbling on the page.	I am jumping in the page.
Something's rattling on the page.	I am shouting in the page.
Something's standing on the page.	I am lying in the page.
Something's moving on the page.	I am walking in the page.
Something's twinkling on the page.	I am spitting in the page.
Something's trembling on the page.	I am frozen in the page.
Something's sinking on the page.	I am suffering in the page.
Something's growing on the page.	I am cutting it in the page.
Something's piping on the page.	I am burning it in the page.
Something's leaking on the page.	I am watering it in the page.
Something's annoying on the page.	I am carrying it outside the page.
Something's happening with this page.	I am throwing it outside the page.
Something's wrong with this page.	

All good in the page.

Bob Kotyk

URUK VASE

Insipid
Kings of
Kitsch
Grand fork
Bonanza
Eat the
Receipt
With steak
Knives
Showing
How are
You
Honey
Smile pulled
Taut
Friendly size
Underneath
No border
Left
Outside
Quite different
From the
Truth
I know
It's been
A few years
But
Let's open
The smashed
Jewel
Boxes
And listen to
The sound
Of
This sweeping
Smelting
Cold
Brand
Returning

Magnet
Mirror
Grief
Deluge
Hear me
Hear them
Why
Couldn't we
See
It

SPEEDWAY

Didn't
Think to think
I was
On two
Legs somewhere
On foot
Somewhere
Sixteen years
I used to be
A comic
Image father
A footman for the
Duke of Windsor
Some time
In the
Prosthetics closet
Digging
Dung fuel
For a
Sidewalk lip
Paved over
The recipes
Took a trip
Portus
Cale
Fermented
Silence
Expropriated

With
Full compliance
A good
Heart
In there
And a daughter
Somewhere
Our lady
Of wailing
Rumbles
Over a
Flat trail
Rat
Buried nearby
With a
Commemorative
Plaque
Some of the
People
Heard about
That

Michael Neal Morris

Road Home

A white truck passing me on the left was nothing new, even one pulling an RV trailer. That is Texas. I didn't even check to see if it had the seemingly requisite. "Don't Tread on Me" or "Make American Great Again" stickers. But when I glanced over and saw my mother, who had been dead a year and a half, in the passenger seat looking through her reading glasses at something in her lap, I thought I might be in the middle of one of those dreams that come to those who try to deceive themselves that mourning is over.

But it was another day driving on I-30, somewhere between cups of coffee, miles to go before I slept, and all that shit.

Then I saw my father, her original husband, in the driver's seat, looking as he always did: resolute on what was before him, the radio probably at a reasonable volume, hoping Mom would have nothing to say until they'd reached their destination when she'd be someone else's problem.

As the trailer got past, I thought about pulling even with them. I wrestled with the idea for a full minute before I stepped into action, so by the time I accelerated, I had to weave through a few cars to catch up.

I began honking and waving, and at first Mom and Dad didn't notice. I thought, *here is where I wake up now or crash*.

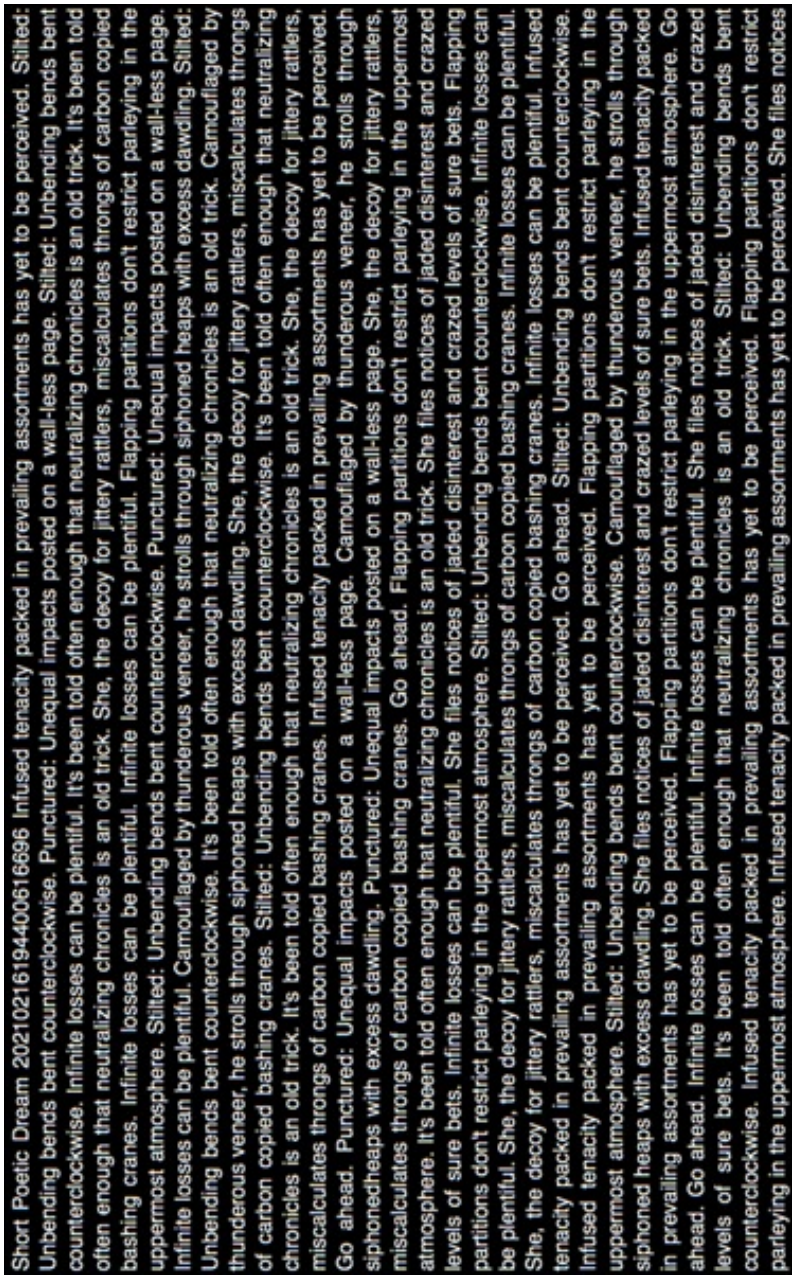
Then Dad seemed to look up as if rolling his eyes and saying, *What the hell is wrong with that kid?* even though I'm pushing sixty. Then he turned his head and mouthed, "What?"

Mom looked over at Dad, and then at me. Then her middle finger rose in front of her scowl at the same time I realized they were just another old couple stuck on the highway with an idiot. My foot came off the gas, but I didn't brake.



Randee Silv

Catenary Pendulous Waves



Short Prose Dream 20210216194326803755 Mud balls sling in my direction. Decompose. It's been told often enough that neutralizing chronicles is an old trick. Camouflaged by thunderous veneer, he strolls through siphoned heaps with excess dawdling. Winter's twilight is without a floor plan. Streaks of fundamental nothingness programed through spotty haze is readable from where I sit. Mud balls sling in my direction. Streaks of fundamental nothingness programed through spotty haze is readable from where I sit. Pseudogalvanizing only fumbles. It's been told often enough that neutralizing chronicles is an old trick. Streaks of fundamental nothingness programed through spotty haze is readable from where I sit. Speeded delays swerve shoddy landings tied to blatant scopes. Garbled bearers sweep through reigning hazardous flurries. Streaks of fundamental nothingness programed through spotty haze is readable from where I sit. It would be true that conjectured purging is an ancient way to bargain. Uprootings and replantings inhale and dispatch. Pathways: Aching for ripeness. Erected fictional sagas examined and produced. Mud balls sling in my direction. Erected fictional sagas examined and produced. It would be true that conjectured purging is an ancient way to bargain. It's been told often enough that neutralizing chronicles is an old trick. Camouflaged by thunderous veneer, he strolls through siphoned heaps with excess dawdling. Uprootings and replantings inhale and dispatch. Pathways: Aching for ripeness. Erected fictional sagas examined and produced. Uprootings and replantings inhale and dispatch. Pathways: Aching for ripeness. Mud balls sling in my direction. Mud balls sling in my direction. Garbled bearers sweep through reigning hazardous flurries. Erected fictional sagas examined and produced. It would be true that conjectured purging is an ancient way to bargain. Pathways: Aching for ripeness. Winter's twilight is without a floor plan. It would be true that conjectured purging is an ancient way to bargain. Streaks of fundamental nothingness programed through spotty haze is readable from where I sit. Pseudogalvanizing only fumbles. Mud balls sling in my direction. Infinite losses can be plentiful. Pathways: Aching for ripeness. Garbled bearers sweep through reigning hazardous flurries. Erected fictional sagas examined and produced. Speeded delays swerve shoddy landings tied to blatant scopes. She wasn't moving. Mud balls sling in my direction. Decompose. Decompose. Speeded delays swerve shoddy landings tied to blatant scopes. Erected fictional sagas examined and produced. It would be true that conjectured purging is an ancient way to bargain. Streaks of fundamental nothingness programed through spotty haze is readable from where I sit. Infinite losses can be plentiful. It's been told often enough that neutralizing chronicles is an old trick. Camouflaged by thunderous veneer, he strolls through siphoned heaps with excess dawdling. Infinite losses can be plentiful. Garbled bearers sweep through reigning hazardous flurries. Erected fictional sagas examined and produced. It's been told often enough that neutralizing chronicles is an old trick. Camouflaged by thunderous veneer, he strolls through siphoned heaps with excess dawdling. Winter's twilight is without a floor plan. Decompose. Speeded delays swerve shoddy landings tied to blatant scopes. Streaks of fundamental nothingness programed through spotty haze is readable from where I sit. Infinite losses can be plentiful. Garbled bearers sweep through reigning hazardous flurries. Speeded delays swerve shoddy landings tied to blatant scopes. She wasn't moving. Uprootings and replantings inhale and dispatch. Pathways: Aching for ripeness. Garbled

Short Poetic Dream 20210128160227013726 Grievances narrated with accurate precision. Smaller into smaller. She heard. Dodged accelerations crumble. Smaller into smaller. She heard. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. Embedded settings reach peak sonority. Smaller into smaller. Dodged accelerations crumble. Mixtures: Timetables weld gridded platform knots singled out. Embedded settings reach peak sonority. Cheap pleasantries rise on routine occasions. Dodged accelerations crumble. Smaller into smaller. Dodged accelerations crumble. Embedded settings reach peak sonority. Smaller into smaller. Cheap pleasantries rise on routine occasions. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. Smaller into smaller. She heard. She heard. Mixtures: Timetables weld gridded platform knots singled out. Cheap pleasantries rise on routine occasions. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. Embedded settings reach peak sonority. Embedded settings reach peak sonority. She heard. Smaller into smaller. Dodged accelerations crumble. Dodged accelerations crumble. Mixtures: Timetables weld gridded platform knots singled out. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. She heard. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. She heard. Cheap pleasantries rise on routine occasions. Mixtures: Timetables weld gridded platform knots singled out. Embedded settings reach peak sonority. Mixtures: Timetables weld gridded platform knots singled out. Embedded settings reach peak sonority. She heard. Mixtures: Timetables weld gridded platform knots singled out. Mixtures: Timetables weld gridded platform knots singled out. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. Mixtures: Timetables weld gridded platform knots singled out. Mixtures: Timetables weld gridded platform knots singled out. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. Dodged accelerations crumble. Embedded settings reach peak sonority. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. Embedded settings reach peak sonority. Embedded settings reach peak sonority. Mixtures: Timetables weld gridded platform knots singled out. Cheap pleasantries rise on routine occasions. Smaller into smaller. Embedded settings reach peak sonority. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. Smaller into smaller. She heard. Smaller into smaller. Cheap pleasantries rise on routine occasions. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. Mixtures: Timetables weld gridded platform knots singled out. Embedded settings reach peak sonority. Embedded settings reach peak sonority. Cheap pleasantries rise on routine occasions. Smaller into smaller. Embedded settings reach peak sonority. Smaller into smaller. Mixtures: Timetables weld gridded platform knots singled out. Embedded settings reach peak sonority. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. She heard. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. Cheap pleasantries rise on routine occasions. Dodged accelerations crumble. Embedded settings reach peak sonority. Mixtures: Timetables weld gridded platform knots singled out. Mixtures: Timetables weld gridded platform knots singled out. Dodged accelerations crumble. Dodged accelerations crumble. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. Dodged accelerations crumble.Grievances narrated with accurate precision. Embedded settings reach peak sonority. She heard. She heard. Smaller into smaller. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. She heard. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. Grievances narrated with accurate precision. Dodged accelerations crumble. Embedded settings reach

Short Poetic Dream 20210216003056111833 It does smother.It does smother. You can flood, scramble or forget any part of this. Just a shriveled tone. You can flood, scramble or forget any part of this. Catenary pendulous waves. Just ashriveled tone. It does smother. Just a shriveled tone. The brightness of daylight never ceases. Prankster deities slipped scrambled concoctions under doors.It does smother. Needled columns. Just a shriveled tone. You can flood, scramble or forget any part of this.Catenary pendulous waves. Catenary pendulous waves. Just a shriveled tone. Catenary pendulous waves.Prankster deities slipped scrambled concoctions under doors. Needled columns. Just a shriveled tone. You can flood, scramble or forget any part of this. Catenary pendulous waves. Just a shriveled tone. You can flood, scramble or forget any part of this. It does smother. Just a shriveled tone. Whereabouts exist. Catenary pendulous waves. It does smother. Prankster deities slipped scrambled concoctions under doors. It does smother. It does smother. Needled columns. Catenary pendulous waves. Needled columns. It does smother. The brightness of daylight never ceases. Just a shriveled tone. Whereabouts exist. The brightness of daylight never ceases. You can flood, scramble or forget any part of this. Whereabouts exist.The brightness of daylight never ceases. You can flood, scramble or forget any part of this.You can flood, scramble or forget any part of this. Catenary pendulous waves. Catenary pendulous waves. You can flood,You can flood, scramble or forget any part of this.You can flood, scramble or forget any part of this. The brightness of daylight never ceases. Catenary pendulous waves. Catenary pendulous waves. Needled columns. Catenary pendulous waves. You can flood, scramble or forget any part of this. Needled columns. Needled columns.Catenary pendulous waves. Just a shriveled tone. Whereabouts exist. The brightness of daylight never ceases. Needled columns. Whereabouts exist. Whereabouts exist. The brightness of daylight never ceases. Just a shriveled tone. You can flood, scramble or forget any part of this. Whereabouts exist. Just a shriveled tone. Prankster deities slipped scrambled concoctions under doors. You can flood, scramble or forget any part of this. Needled columns. It does smother. Needled columns. The brightness of daylight never ceases. Whereabouts exist. Needled columns. Catenary pendulous waves. Catenary pendulous waves. Whereabouts exist. Whereabouts exist. Whereabouts exist. The brightness of daylight never ceases. Whereabouts exist. The brightness of daylight never ceases. Just a shriveled tone. It does smother. Just a shriveled tone. You can flood, scramble or forget any part of this. Needled columns. It does smother. Whereabouts exist. Catenary pendulous waves. Catenary pendulous waves. It does smother. It does smother. You can flood, scramble or forget any part of this. Catenary pendulous waves. The brightness of daylight never ceases. Catenary pendulous waves. Prankster deities slipped scrambled concoctions under doors. It does smother. Catenary pendulous waves. Needled columns. Whereabouts exist. Prankster deities slipped scrambled concoctions under doors. Just a shriveled tone. You can flood, scramble or forget any part of this. It does smother. Whereabouts exist. Needled columns. The brightness of daylight never ceases. Prankster deities slipped scrambled concoctions under doors. You can flood, scramble or forget any part of this. Just a shriveled tone. Just a shriveled tone. The brightness of daylight never ceases. Whereabouts exist. Prankster deities slipped scrambled concoctions under doors.

Eric Hoffman

Translations of some very early haiku by Ozaki Hōsai

(Tottori, c. 1899-1902)

きれ凧の糸かかりけり梅の枝
kire-dako no ito kakari keri ume no eda

Stray kite
entwined
in plum branches

水打つて静かな家や夏やなぎ
mizu utte shizuka na ie ya natsu-yanagi

House silent
after rain—
summer willow

病いへずうつうつとして春くるる
yamai iezu utsu-utsu to shite haru kururu

Spring ends—
still unwell,
filled with discontent

峠路や時雨晴れたり馬の声
toge-ji ya shigure hare tari uma no koe

Mountain road,
winter rainclouds disperse—
a horse neighs

酒のまぬ身は葛水のつめたさよ
sake nomanu mi wa kassui no tsumetasa

Stone sober—
my body cold
as want

David Lohrey

Calamity

This is no bugle song I can tell you.
There are no more bugles. There are
violins but no fiddles. The bugle is a tool
not an instrument. Unless one means to say
an instrument of torture. Its use announces
murder, in victory or in defeat. One blows death.
The bugler summons men to die and celebrates it.

One hesitates to impose on the dying. One doesn't wish
to presume. Let folks feel about dying as they will. I have
no objection to chow lines and the inevitable dinner gong.
I don't want to be summoned to die. Chapels are silent
for a reason. Few people wish to be corralled in filth and driven
to slaughter. Camp administrators play a bootleg copy
of *Bridge over Troubled Waters*.

Eager executioners are ghouls. Death gives the bored
something to do. There is so much planning. Gathering one's
effects; paying one's bills. We all have it coming; proceed
to check out, as the hospital administrators direct. "Follow us."
There is that inevitable rush of adrenaline, an odd sense
of an ending not unlike finishing a good novel. But it is not
a horse race and one doesn't wish to hear a buzzer.

We may not be human but we have our dignity and deserve
an honest end. The days of bugles are over. Let them blare
music but let it be punk. Not Wagner as Coppola imagined.
Nothing so blatantly Romantic, nothing so pitifully operatic,
please. Our days of dying are not over but the cheering has
to stop. It is no time for irony, this. Mass murder is real.
What we learn is that nobody misses God, but they miss Hell.

If war is not an extrajudicial killing, I don't know what is.
We careen from one state of emergency to the next. We are
summoned to the semi-circle of self-reproach, an AA meeting
of guilt. "My name is Adam and I am a racist." We are then
taken to be shot. They dragged my mother out the back door
and burned her body. "My name is Eve and I am starving."
She confessed to inviting the Devil into her bed.

Play the flute. Consult Snoop Dog. He lives in a war zone.
Like Euripides, we should ask the Trojan women. Nothing
dehumanizing, like that shit pumped into the holding cells
at Abu Ghraib. We want men and women to gain the strength
they'll need first for here and then the afterlife. Nothing degrading.
Play the French horns. Cue the oboe. How about one of those
magnificent boy choirs, chanting, "Farewell, Phèdre."

Sheila E. Murphy

Why I Love Introverts

They insist upon a distance that allows us both to breathe.
They listen without turning sour.
They are so plural there is room for me.
They resist the urge to interrupt this program.
They may or may not speak.
They look good in clothes and out of clothes.
They arm wrestle indifference without showing their hand.
They play an instrument that need not be played.
They refrain from joining a religious order without thought.
They pray the offertory anyway.
They take walks in the common gardens and become part of the scenery.
They rehearse being unnoticed.
They readily afford a natural poverty.
They effortlessly hold my hand from Mars.

Scheduled

I am sure you don't want to hear this.
Tomorrow he is coming by to take the bed.
I don't blame you for being speechless.
This has been brewing a long time.
I didn't say anything on purpose.
You know that.
Sometimes things just have to come out in the open.
I don't expect you to do anything.
I am a bit surprised myself.
Ten o'clock, he said.
That's all I know.

Performance Is Conceit

I bobble see-through froth
to wear to someone's
bed lines, give me chemistry
or give me breadth, the seeming
seams all windowy a drive-
in porch of raconteur
to wit the seasonal restraint
why don't we just
lie here and stain the earth
against our better flesh
and never drown in what
we have not deemed
against our better
justice to be dramatized
and rained upon as skeletal
redress forms bake sales
of our ballast and relents

Keith Nunes

Trouble up top

Siren-sound in shuddery room of
Run-of-the-pepper-mill upheaval in
Cliff-side grandeur-home staged with
Designer effects set in cooing cul-de-sac

Russell Hobbs boiling on black marble
Steely-stainless imported German steaming

Highest-price high-volume aqua vitae
Crackling brains of baleful intent
Standing uptight-abstract in black & beige
The desperately loud, quietly desperate

Bad place

I was in a bad place
There were some bad people there
The place itself, well, it was a space of unknown sincerity and character
It was decorative, draped in accoutrements of tasteful tone
But within it all, and it was all within,
I was in a bad place

The continuous present

Flowers
Or liars
Something quite typical
The submariner who can't walk straight after all those bubbles
Here comes a dog
A dog with a smile, at a snail's pace but without the guidance of a snail,
Round the running track, a walker
Stoned, having been stoned by a malevolent mob

An eclipse
Moon as massif, a massive moon too big for the sun

She's crossing the steppe
Step by step but out of step and
Yes, stepped on but finally stepping out, stepping off

Flowers on the fringes of the Edenist garden
Liars telling us they are not ours, these flowers
They are for sale but they are the sellers'
These liars, telling themselves home-truths in the sober AM
And anyway,
There's flowers everywhere

M.J. Iuppa

In A Silent Way

August, 2018

A steel-blue & black feather, with white crown & ready quill, laid obliquely on my doorstep. By what logic did I pick it up & twirl perfection between my fingertips? I wondered who else had seen it, but left it lying there for me? For something so light, it had heft. Would this feather hold me steady over the course of a thousand days? Would I learn how to listen without fear of losing ground? Would my voice be heard in a room full of consequence? Would I make the *right* decision, knowing survival depended on it?

~ ~ ~

With certain say-so, I pressed this feather's tranquility between the pages of a journal called travel. I promised *safe-keeping*, not to lose it; however, I did lose sight of it for months. Only to be surprised by its quick flutter as if it were coughed out of my journal's darkness to settle onto a solid oak table bathed in lamplight— this accidental still life— where its colors deepened & breathed in the quiet. I breathed, too.

~ ~ ~

May, 2019

We had traveled to Western Ireland, to the town of Grange, just outside of Sligo. We were staying in a large stone house called Clasai Rua, with a full view of the mountain ridge Benbulben— "the black pig lying on its back." It was striking to sit and drink a farmer's cup of breakfast tea, while gazing out a bank of kitchen windows that captured Benbulben in its grid of small panes. I was seven months cancer free. I had a close cap of white-gray hair— my eyebrows & lashes were filling back in— my face, re-appearing. In that split second, I knew I was a part of the reflection of everything that was held in and out of time.

~ ~ ~

Every morning, just as first light piqued the sky, a raven, that presided over the pasture where cows spent hours feeding and sleeping, would sit on the thick stone ledge and rap its beak insistently on my bedroom window.

Vexed— I would rise and open the curtain, and he would tilt his head, like a cleric, and size me up with a dismissive shrug. *What?* Not ready yet.

Impatient with me, he'd hop twice, turning fantail to fly to a white cloud of blossoms on an isolated Hawthorn tree. *This became a ritual.*

~ ~ ~

Nothing is what it seems.

~ ~ ~

May, 2019

Standing at the foot of the poet W. B. Yeats's grave, in Drumcliffe, my eyes trace the epitaph: "Cast a Cold Eye / On Life, on Death. / Horseman pass by." And I think, everyone, who stands here for a moment near an umbrella of English sycamore where a small congregation of crow peers down upon them, is aware that their gaze upon the headstone will be short-lived. I must have stood there longer than expected. Holding still in the shadow of the church, in the sudden chill of afternoon, I became invisible to the nature that surrounded me. The crows flew, one by one, to the soggy ground and began to walkabout. A wood mouse scurried along the base the headstone & slipped down a moss-covered hole hidden among small stones, and twigs, and one black feather lying on the margin of the grave. *I picked the feather up.*

~ ~ ~

I am flooded with thoughts from the past that will not leave me.

~ ~ ~

Standing in the middle of the West Bridge, known as the Famine Bridge, in Galway, we looked upon the weir's rushing water and watched the legal limit of seven fly fishermen, casting their lines as they balanced a basket of salmon hooked on a strap wound around their waists. It was sunny, a bit brisk but not chilly; seagulls turned slow circles overhead, crying out their hunger's plight, looking for any scrap of leftover, while pied wagtails, hooded crows, jackdaws, magpies flitted tree to tree that lined the Corrib, and a few woodpigeons waddled along the cobbled streets. The scene was a living post card; a place I wanted to keep as my own. What I kept was a silver-gray feather that floated out of thin air & settled lightly on my sweater.

A young man, who had sidled up near us, saw the feather's landing and began speaking to me, then us. He was a professional birder from Oregon, who had come to Galway to lead a birding field trip, which he was anxious about, because the weather predicted for the next day promised clouds and drizzle. We continued talking, not to miss an opportunity to know more about the birds that we were watching. Once we knew that he was hooked by our attention he began to point out birds that were indigenous to Ireland and compared them to their "distant cousins" we would recognize in the United States. Meeting him was a gift of answers.

~ ~ ~

February, 2020

Mid-winter, 16 months cancer free, but something was brewing. I could feel it in my body without physical evidence. I had no pain or symptoms. I decided

to walk it off. And so, I did, finding the blast of cold air to be that "snap out of it" slap across my face.

Beneath the crab apple in our back yard, I found a red feather lying near puddles and loose stones, like a tiny flame, it dazzled briefly in noon's chilly overcast—this flicker of the past—my desire to be lasting—my cheeks flushed with the feather's certainty, readying to take flight.

~ ~ ~

How long does luck hold out? I've lost the red feather. *Is it under a chair, or inside a box, or beneath my pillow?* I am searching.

~ ~ ~

Christmas, 1976

Long ago in winter, you gave me a gift of feather earrings, and beneath the porch light full of dizzy snow, you said: *Taking off is the first step . . .*

John J. Trause

Chocolate

ROME

I

xocolātl

xocolātl

xocolātl

xocolātl

xocolātl

xocolātl

xocolātl

xocolātl

xocolātl

xocolātl

xocolātl

xocolātl

Fierce, feathered crotalus Queztalcoatl loves *xocolātl*
the food of the gods (*Theobroma cacao*)
Mokaya to Mocha
heart to heart
in humid jungles west of here…
Queztalcoatl, fierce, feathered crotalus,
quaffs cacahuatl
Olmec, Maya, Aztec
…bitter are the seeds encased
Sacred Heart
This is my body
This is my blood
hocus-pocus
bitter water
cacao

xocolātl xocolātl xocolātl

Edenic susurration

[Let us observe a moment of silence at the Rome Stock Exchange]

II

The Eclipse
Danza nera

In bocca al lupo

Edenic susurration

Cacao y xocolātl.
Xocolātl y cacao.

quiquiriquí

chicchirichi cocorocó κικιρίκου

cocorico Kikeriki

kukuryku quiquiriquí

chicchirichi

Cacao y xocolātl.
Xocolātl y cacao.
Il grande Quetzalcoatl dice: ca-cacao.
Il grande Moctezuma dice: co-cocoa.

Cacao y xocolātl.
Xocolātl y cacao.

Cacao y xocolātl.
Xocolātl y cacao.
Il grande Quetzalcoatl dice: ca-cacao.
Il grande Moctezuma dice: co-cocoa.

Cacao y xocolātl.
Xocolātl y cacao.
È la danza nera di Vittoria, ooh!

Cacao y xocolātl.
Xocolātl y cacao.

Cacao y xocolātl.
Xocolātl y cacao.

III

The Eclipse
A gift from Piero to Vittoria

[empty box of chocolates]

IV

Before Noon Tomorrow

AMOR ROMA

La puttana Mara, you did a striptease for me once. Madonna!

cras cras cras

Tomorrow you do a striptease for me eternally captured on film *prêt-à-porter*

seduction for a bit or bite or sip of *xocolātl*
in the eternal city

After all what are little girls made of?

Sugar and spice
And everything nice

Katya loves her chocolates. The stuff that chocolate dreams are made on:

chocolate and jalapeño

cacahuatl

The melting
chocolate palace
of Prince Pondicherry
a Trastevere o sul Gianicolo
as Willie Wonka wanked (*puttana* - cherry)
sits up the fudge mountain inside the factory up there
as Willie Wonka woke, wanked, and walked way up where
one sees the Chocolate River of (Caesar) Augustus Gloop and the Oompa-Loompas
and Anna Magnani yells at Federico Fellini to leave her alone, to go home, to get out of here.

Did the Domus Transitoria too melt in the great fire? I too have seen the Colosseum cast in chocolate.

amore e Roma

amore e aroma a Roma

V

Pontifex Maximus

Des pontifes païens aux pontifes chrétiens

Genevieve's Home Made Chocolates of Garfield, New Jersey, United States of America, presented Pope John Paul II with chocolates from their shop (*Papieskie czekoladki*) on his pontifical visit to New Jersey in October 1995.

A tale in the Iguvine Tablets, as if inscribed on milk chocolate panels, predicts that the lupa Capitolina will be the ancestor of the lupo di Gubbio.

Pot number one of the Duenos inscription *kernos*
(righted to left)

a. IOVESATDEIVOSQOIMEDMITATNEITEDENDOCOSMISVIRCOSIED

b. *iouesāt deivos qoi mēd mitāt, nei tēd endō cosmis vircō siēd*

c. *Iurat deos qui me mittit, ni [erga te] comis virgo sit*

d. 'The person who sends me prays to the gods, lest the girl be not kind towards thee'

VI

Lamb of God

Dolly the Sheep [her/she] (July 5, 1996 – February 14, 2003) had three mothers.

Παναγιώτης

Madonna!

Human Cloning Is Underway in Italy

BY CBSNEWS.COM STAFF CBSNEWS.COM STAFF JANUARY 31, 2002 / 8:41 AM / CBS

A scientific and social uproar is *not* slowing an attempt to clone a human being. In Rome, Italy, this morning, the project leader spoke of the narrowed field of candidates in line to produce the first cloned baby.

Italian fertility specialist Dr. Severino Antinori confirmed today in Rome that he would go ahead with attempts to clone a human being. Antinori previously created a sensation when he used standard techniques to allow a 62-year-old woman to have a baby. Now, he says, hundreds of infertile couples--"who want to become father and mother, to create a new human life," says Antinori--have asked him to produce a cloned baby.

Antinori--who is collaborating with fertility specialist Panos Zavos, who is from Lexington, Kentucky--plans to implant the DNA from an adult's cell into a stripped-down egg from a woman.

VII

xocolātl

xocolātl

xocolātl

xocolātl

xocolātl

xocolātl

xocolātl

Chocolate for the Seven Hills Basilica di Santa Maria

in Cosmedin *la Bocca della Verità* O o tell the truth I long for…

Wenn ich mir was wünschen dürfte chocolate lambs [Hershey] for Easter

caffè mocha on the Via Veneto moccacino cacahuatl *xocolātl*

The chocolate skull of Saint Valentine in the

Basilica di Santa Maria in Cosmedin

the Sacred Heart of Dolly dead on Saint Valentine's Day

a chocolate Easter egg

Send me a box of chocolates for my little girl.

Night, porter. See you tomorrow.

John J. Trause
132 Hackensack Street
Wood-Ridge, NJ 07075
jnjarthouse@yahoo.com

Monday, March 20, 2017

Richard Linklater
1901 East 51st Street
Austin, TX 78723

Dear Mr. Linklater,

I am just writing, not as an ordinary fan, but with an idea for a possible future film you may consider making. I just bought for my home library the Criterion Collection of your Before Trilogy, and it has been a pleasure seeing these films again and the extra material on the three DVDs. I have enjoyed all your films for years.

If you are considering a fourth film in the Before series, I would like to propose *Before Noon*, to be set in Rome, Italy. I like the significance of *Before Sunrise* set in Vienna (neurosis, mysticism), *Before Sunset* set in Paris (birth of Modernism), and *Before Midnight* set in Greece (Classicism). Rome, the Eternal City, would be a great place to continue the series. Now in their 50s, Jesse and Céline could wake up and experience a real-time drama played out before "high noon", rekindling their love and passion with Céline performing a striptease like Mara (Sophia Loren) in Vittorio de Sica's *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (*Ieri, oggi, domani*, 1963), reprised by Sophia Loren as Isabella de la Fontaine in Robert Altman's *Prêt-à-Porter* (*Ready to Wear*, 1994). This is just a thought.

I should provide an introduction. I am the Director of the Oradell Public Library in Bergen County, New Jersey, very close to Manhattan, New York, and I am one of the moderators of the Library's IFC Film Club, "IFC" standing for Independent * Foreign * Classic. Last month we had a lively discussion of your *Dazed and Confused*, clearly a contemporary classic.

I am also a poet, writer, and performer with a number of books out. In fact, tonight, the Friends of the Library are holding a reception for my latest book, *Picture This*: *For Your Eyes and Ears* (Loveland, Ohio : Dos Madres Press, 2016), a collection of poems on art, photography, film, and art history. One project that I have been working on for about thirteen years (I procrastinate on literary projects) is a series of poems on the Italian nougat candy *torrone*; every year for Christmas my Italian

aunt gives me a box or two, and one year, years ago, the box had six different flavors of *torrone*, each with a flavor associated with a city in Italy: Lemons : Naples; Almonds : Venice; Coffee: Florence; Hazelnuts : Milan; Coconuts : Pisa; and Chocolate : Rome. I have written a sequence of introductory poems and the first four flavor/city poems and had them published in anthologies and journals. I am at work on "Coconuts" and ruminating on "Chocolate". Both seem daunting. Anyhow, in the arrangement of the poems for a future book, I play off among other conceits de Sica's *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (*Ieri, oggi, domani*).

I would love to meet you one day; for now, please accept my humble suggestion.

Sincerely,

John J. Trause

John J. Trause

Michael J. Leach

Easy

My new friend from Germany
asks me in perfect English
if I know any German.

My response comes quickly.
'Einfach,'
I mispronounce softly.

After a pause,
I proceed to share
the distant memory surfaced by this single word.

I was in a silent
secondary school library
where the 2 cultures meet,
studying for my year 12 unit
'Specialist Mathematics'.
A friend from my English
class was sitting across from me
studying German.

Red pen in hand,
she reached over
to my page full of complex
planes & imaginary
numbers

to scrawl a single word
in the margin: 'Einfach'.
I looked up at her quizzically.

'It means easy,'
she whispered with a quokka grin.
'That maths you're studying
is easy compared to the language
I'm studying.'

'Agreed,' I breathed.

My mouth & eyes smile
at this long-forgotten recollection
as I study my new friend from Germany.

In response
to my anecdote,
she mirrors my smiles
& declares in perfect Denglish,
'Well, for me,
German's einfach.'

Time Travel

Callan Park, Sydney, November 2018

Leaving this manor house's veranda,
we stroll by a purple jacaranda
to find some native shade
where the modern world fades
to sounds of poetry—sweet memoranda.

Life Locks

grid	lock	
door	lock	
	lock	
	lock	in
	lock	out
	lock	box
	lock	er
combo	lock	
land	lock	
sea	lock	
body	lock	
pop and	lock	
inter (b)	lock	
un(b)	lock	
	Lock,	Stock…
Sher	lock	
	lock	et
pad	lock	
heart	lock	
wed	lock	
	lock	smith
	lock	pick
picked	lock	
	lock	up
	lock	down
air	lock	
dead	lock	

Tom Beckett

PRAXIS

What we
Have between

Our legs
Isn't *junk*,

But it's
Not coherent,

Cannot be
Said, it's

A problem
For one

To solve.

Unchained Threnody

The beautiful
Barely coherent

Text previously
Located here

Has been
Deleted by

Its idiot

Author, me.

Future Perfect

The Subject

will have begun

to be
copied and pasted.

Alison J Barton

dissonance

if a parasite crawls into my countenance from
your bearing to the fleshy interior of
my stomach I will live with it I want
to be of you
us of each other I want us to start
at your head and end at my

a continuous
being line
  your mouth ovals like a corpse

dissonance
the diamond between my
scapula scent your mode of inquiry
in the night
you move like cool fluid
I make my own lines

we warm our skin on each other
as long as —

what language might be in your mind?
clean-linen-books-and-philosophy love

a formless mass
my hand authorising the pen
dashed eyes from the screen

royal blue dust

fingers curled towards the heart
(a protective gesture)
the upper back shoulders
rounded over the pulmonary the
gait of a woman unsolved
clothed in scraps
gape to bear

where is the place for human suffering
if not here
where should it be borne

in a soft ice cream mouth
brittle chocolate tongue

Budja Budja, Halls Gap

a mountain gully calling you like Alison Whittaker's
white linen at Hanging Rock
calling you like you're not supposed to be there
like you can't see the blindness in your own eyes

you crawl through rock crevice without water
in the un-light of a stone cave
notions slip between gaps
history between people,
an un-mendable menace

an old whisper caught in the air
swallowed into the lungs
shadow footsteps just behind
you reach for rock edges with a hot dry arm
black eyes burn on white skin

tiny spirals coil from a dirt ground
the sun long on orange pebble stretches
the still quiet
waterfall on green
moss shallow windless
valley

you said you wouldn't mind dying next to her but you're not next to her
a baby rumbles in her belly

Mark Pirie

Watchwords

I find
Roger McGough
again
or
maybe
Roger McGough
finds me.

it's a book fair (not a gig)
he's hardly looking
to meet me
but on the back cover
he seems approachable.

I pick him up, carry him home
like it's after a rock gig.
hey, it's a poem, he ain't heavy.
he might laugh in person.

"watchwords" he first said
to me as a young poet reading,
and I'm still watching them
making this poem.

Neruda

Neruda
in the '40s
pursued
by
Police
thought
of
the People.

They created him, inspired
his poetry, and rage, his love.

Imprisoned in his mind, his words were
fighting for Punishment
of those unjust.

(The social cost
was not economics
but pure poetry
to him.)

He left the bourgeoisie and Fascists
for the common good
and paid the price:
his real wealth
a life of poetry.

2150AD

I'm
Operations
Manager,
Linguistics,
for
the
Department
of
Conversation.

We
work
to save
all poets
and words
from
extinction.

Penelope Weiss

Climbing Saltash

I went barefoot on the mountain.
When the sun's blood froze, my heart froze, too.

Somehow, I made it back home.
I built up the fire and sat for a long time at the kitchen window.

The next day, your dog growled at me when I came to see you.
You said I should have patted her on the head
or put out my hand for her to lick.

We're still friends, but I won't visit you again.
And I still don't know why the sun's blood froze.

Matador

I fought bulls and lost.
I fought life and won
a red ribbon of memory.

The pain is mine.
My eyes see only bulls
jumping over me
on a bright afternoon.

I wear a face that covers scars,
a denim jacket, a blue earring
and always a black hat.

Keith Polette

The Ride

I place the blanket on the dark horse's back, then the saddle, and I run the leather straps beneath the belly and cinch them tight. I step into the stirrup and swing myself into place, the way a buoy rights itself after being buffeted by a heavy wave. Beneath me, I feel the wild machinery of muscle and heart winding up, as the prow of the neck and head aim at the vanishing point where the vast field, green as a childhood song, bleeds into the bruised horizon. I think to touch bootheel to quivering flank but lean forward instead and whisper a single word into the ear turned back — a periscope eye trained on me — and before I can close my mouth, we're off. As if the horse had swallowed a blast of fireworks, it arches its back and rears. We rise high like a knight on a chessboard, high enough that hooves scrape the pewter edge of sky, and for a moment we are an act of lightning, fast-frozen in time — there has never been such an exquisite loneliness as ours. Hooves hit the ground hard, and we bolt breakneck, splitting the fading light, becoming a levy breaking and the mad rush of river after. And in that moment, I realize that if I were to step out of my body, I would burst into shooting stars.

in the bucket
I carry my reflection
to stalled horses

The Birds

You cannot teach a crab to walk straight.
—*Aristophanes*

Sunday morning. Mourning doves, grackles, starlings, and cowbirds land in the backyard where they wade through the grassy light, squawking like a carnival sideshow as they poke for bugs, their eyes alert, their heads ticking like second hands as they scan the tops of the surrounding rock walls for crouching cats.

distant church bells
three cardinals gather
at the feeder

As I pass by an open window, I am startled to hear the birds speaking. I pause to listen and am even more surprised to hear them engage in a philosophical

disputation. A mourning dove was flapping its wing and arguing for existential nihilism, citing Sartre, declaiming that the mindless repetition of their lives was little more than a slow migration into a maw. A grackle dissented, and following Eliade, asserted that the repetition was but one wheel in the center of a larger wheel, the rotation of the eternal return, while a starling, paraphrasing Derrida, insisted that they were all merely bits of de-located grammar, flying from one sentence to another, in an endless interchange of self-reflexive texts. A cowbird contended that they all exemplified Hegel's synthesis, since they were the living embodiments of opposites: foot and wing. The birds bickered for half the morning, their words rising and falling like feathers in gusts of wind.

cogito ergo . . .
when is a wing
not a wing?

It was then, from its azalea perch, that the sparrow spoke and, in a sotto voice, reminded them that they were all players in a comedia penned by Aristophanes, repeating lines written long ago, and that in another time and place, they had all been small but vibrant gods. When the other birds heard this, they fell silent, their eyes blank and bright as embers. Then, before they took to the air like music about to be played, they began to glow in the light of the full moon that was still hanging in the morning sky like a spotlight that someone had neglected to turn off.

raven's cry
when no one knew
iron or oil

Bob Heman

from **INFORMATION**

INFORMATION

Knows the first time a check was written in the movies, the first time a taxi driver was portrayed by a black man, the first time a woman was shown wearing pants. Knows the first time the moon was shown in the sky. Knows the first time a scientist's laboratory became part of the plot. Knows the first word that was ever spoken.

INFORMATION

Knows there's a story behind one of the doors, a story that will contain blood or a mirror or a woman who is waiting to punish him, that will contain an animal that must be described using numbers or an incomplete set of colors, that uses the idea of pain only as a first step to a revelation about the efficacy of words, or of the punishment strap, to give his life a new meaning.

INFORMATION

They will eat the dead. They will eat their own hands. They will eat the machines that look like trees, and the water that trickles out of the sky. They will eat the dreams that might have saved them, and the words that try to explain it all. They will eat the future even before it is able to arrive.

INFORMATION

Sometimes a man is added to the plot so she won't have to drive alone. He might be dressed like a farmer or a sailor or a traveling salesman. She does not notice that he is wearing a mask, so she never wonders who he might really be. Somehow the distance never gets any closer.

INFORMATION

The pieces can be arranged differently each time. Sometimes the woman is placed where the priest is supposed to stand. Sometimes there are rabbits hiding in the car the bears drive. Each time the sign says the name of a different city.

Each time the milk wagon arrives too late, or is filled instead with cantaloupes or honeydews.

INFORMATION

Is able to tell a story using radishes or small stones. Is able to tell the story of the man before he became a man. Is able to return to the barn where the story began. Is able to enter the stories of others, but is never more than a fragment of the real story.

INFORMATION

If they are afraid it means they were given the wrong word. If they are happy it means they were given the wrong body. If they are sad it means they are in the wrong building. If they are hungry it means that they chose the wrong door.

INFORMATION

Is afraid to touch the dead. Is afraid to touch the living. Is afraid to touch the air. Is afraid to touch the ocean, or the fire that resembles us. Is afraid to touch the earth from which we were formed. Is afraid to touch the machine that gives us life. Is afraid to touch himself, or the shadows that we leave behind. Is afraid to touch the only memories that inhabit us. Is always afraid. Always.

INFORMATION

The lighthouse reappears in the story about giraffes. There are almost enough women in the forest to fill the boat. They were never able to explain the clouds that hovered over their heads. They didn't understand that they were only a metaphor.

INFORMATION

They say it is night even though it is not. They claim the car is a hippo and that the forest is only painted on. They think that speech is only possible using the words printed on the page. They think the color red is an aberration, and that counting is a way of measuring the sky. They understand that the woman is no longer an explanation.

INFORMATION

Thinks the truck is more powerful than it really is. Uses the rope and the ax to save the children. Tells stories about the barn later on, after the children have children of their own, and the birds are only a fading memory.

INFORMATION

The mechanical heart allows the tree to live again. Each night the barn is affixed to a different place on the mountain. The bears are never allowed to use the boats. Instead they must imitate the process of walking as they try to make the distance disappear.

INFORMATION

Removes the body from the sitting room so he can sit. Removes the windows so the forest can enter, and the ceiling so the sky can be seen. If there are cows he knows it is summer. If there is a machine he knows the night will soon approach. The words he says would be appropriate at any time.

INFORMATION

Never wonders how the pecans get out of their shells and into the can. Never wonder why the flowers in the vase are always yellow. Never wonders where the bears went. Never wonders why the women are all given the same line to speak. Never wonders if the horizon is real. Never wonders if the machine will start working again.

Hrishikesh Srinivas

Trois couleurs
après les films de Krzysztof Kieślowski

Bleu
Fermer vos yeux
Aller sans
'Moi'

Blanc
Là
Même lutte
De votre cœur

Rouge
(Clan)destin
Aux autres/
Au temps perdu ?

Three colors
after the films of Krzysztof Kieślowski

Blue
To close your eyes
Go without
'Me'

White
There
Same struggle
Of your heart

Red
(Clan)destine
For others/
For lost time?

Another Balloon

The car swerved a little
and a hand outstretched from the passenger's seat
window let go of held ribbon

A voice cried out repeatedly it's floating away
and indeed it was, beyond the darkness of the live oak boughs,
a slow pirouette in a sliver of silver light

The rear lights glared red
and the front wheels assumed a turn of indecision,
the bare arm wilting out in the open air

The car stopped to park before starting up again
for it was far too high up by now,
fast becoming absorbed into the deep blue twilight

The arm withdrew within
the vehicle kept circling the lot until it was out of sight
then returned the way it had come in

Paul Pfleuger, Jr

Four Poems

one of the attractions
no matter how many
and the unique interaction
greatest escape of all
for the ultimate adventure
you have been chosen
will you belong to
your body and mind
to open your eyes
to pleasure and inspire
as you soar through
a different dimension sense
an interstellar trip feeling
a result of pursuing
to the careful placement
there's a reason this
when we say that
this your first clue
get that classic feel
of the classic machine
you will feel exactly
while experiencing a feeling
say that you've tamed
a super death feeling
this beast bucks wildly
and fangs his fangs

ϕ

better today tomorrow you
not all created equal
fragrances reflect qualities within
emote an inspiring quote
being your own boss
your own fairy story
prefer the word libertine
we found our voices
exclusive benefits life-improving content
comfort in tough times

beauty within conscious consumers
tired of being tired
a gift of time
what treats lay inside
relax returning to silence
quotes to live by
beat anxiety navigate uncertainty
let's dance titting about
free feel good fix
for people who want
you are not alone
enjoy heart-warming personal stories
be kind to yourself
understand happiness from within
loved by all ages
emotional relief hand bottled

ϕ

I want to apologize
so I deeply apologize
to everyone I offended
direct and special apologies
I have to admit
it's hard to admit
I was so wrong
apology for the insensitivity
that was my way
my words were insensitive
the words I spoke
i shouldn't have spoken
despite anything anyone says
I'm taking this seriously
the book I endorsed
that I did blackface
by excusing historical racism
do not starve yourselves
a completely thoughtless post
sorry for offending anyone
it's not my character
I am deeply remorseful
I have evolved and matured
I've learned my lesson

before all of you
it won't happen again

ϕ

true tales of adventure
wanderlust alive and well
branded content try this
the wide-open world awaits
curse like a sailor
go with us outside
keep dreaming about exploring
reeling in the years
visit over-shared instagrammed places
your outside side ready
hiking outside is free
keep it wild adventurer
get your fish on
share thoughts and stories
out there live bravely
the world has changed
eventually chose our isolation
off the beaten track
real simple different cigarettes
a shot worth taking
filled with wild abandon
find your true north
the object in motion
addicted to the view
we called it solitude
cure for cabin fever

Jane Simpson

Finding him

after the call from St John to say the alarm round his chest
has been activated and the ambulance was on its way

after the call from Meals on Wheels about lunches untaken
from the crate by the front door

after the no-response when I drop in, ring the bell,
wonder if he has heard, remember
the security code and let myself in
and I see him in his bed
just the way he wanted it to be
so he would never know
it had happened.
Finding him.

Death will silence my scenarios and release
the music of the profoundly deaf
shutter his paintings on the living room walls
and flood the house with light.

After death has come and the quick burial he wanted
I will sit among his papers
see outside the bedroom window
the roses he tended, watched grow
and wrenched
with a sharp spade.

No easy peace

(Christchurch, New Zealand, after 15 March 2019)

The widower leads from a wheelchair.
Little children follow him on bicycles
festooned with streamers and flowers
under the arches of bare trees.

A hooter sounds opposite the Al Noor Mosque.

Massed cyclists jostle at the start,
a shared pathway down Hagley Park.
All aboard the Peace Train Cycle Ride!

A small woman in brown robes stands
on the steps of the restored Buddhist Centre.
The abbess speaks noble words –
distorted by a megaphone.

Cyclists in the sun, cyclists by the fence,
cyclists straddling their bikes,
some leaving helmets and gloves on –
are still.

The Peace Train heads off,
weaves through suburban streets.
We stop at the city's seldom
-visited sacred places:

the Hare Krishna Temple, Synagogue,
Catholic and Anglican Cathedrals, Baptist Church
and at the end to the second place
of slaughter.

We listen to speeches, prayers
and karakia, shift from foot to foot;
thoughts drift
away from peace

hope, love,
forgiveness and trust –
words I want to anchor,
turn into concrete nouns.

Cyclists – faith and none –
arrive at the end, the second mosque,
on bikes festooned with streamers, flowers
and thorns of peace.

lockdown walk

with a lope
with a twist
with a spring
with a scuff
with a bounce
with a stick
with a jaunt
with a thought
with a song
with a pet
with a single
step

Outside Ballantynes
(the oldest and most exclusive department store in Christchurch)

I stand on the final yellow cross
of waiting,
lean towards
the inviting dark,
to figures camouflaged,
their uniforms not quite
uniforms.

I have observed the 2-metre
silence.
Brace myself to disclose
name address phone email

knowing if I wished
I could scan the lives
of customers before me
squashed between lines,
tracings on a sheet.

The doors lumber open.
A woman greets me from within
her bob, smiles from behind
a lectern.
She is elegance and silver
smoky pink soft power

asks for my name and number
as if she is asking for nothing
touch types strokes keys

nods and smiles
and I am in
– no signing out –
unhurried elegance
and silver.

Alex Glynne

from *Sonnets for You*

2.

Poems are made of birds not ideas.
In the rented garden, you see this this little brown thrush for instance
(the spirit of Gerard Manley Hopkins) this…
but what are you made of? If the soul exists, surely it is this little island
Off the south coast of Gibraltar, named after Joan Miro
Surely it is *an absence* who said that?
There is a rock there (on that island) and on that rock
a church, and on that church a goat (Thomas Merton)
but how to find it? Self-enquiry? Auto-fiction?
Gerard Manley Hopkins lifts one wing
and then another How would that be? you wonder
to be a birdy wholly birdy, to have no questions.
Boring? Empty?
Maybe but he can sing though

3.

A hand carved Welsh love spoon
one of a set of two
  south westerly wind, rising
loss (a pervasive sense of
the Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie
and a bee an hour in the tub with Paul Klee
on Modern Art and to show for it?
A deepened sense of line utopian feeling pruney fingers
We are reminded, at certain points, of Rodins' Thinker; at others
  an almost total failure of vision, really.
Would it be twee to identify some kind of theme
here? I think so yes remember the igloo?
  How about a symbol?
  Where'd that bee go?

from *18 Small Windows*

1.

The content we deserve or the content we desire?
'Bear' sits next to guy. But why? I like your post
radicalpoet65, but not the avant stylings of your response.
A Jeff Koons retrospective, wild fires,
that look in Elons' eyes when heavy falcon banks
then, slowly, comes in to dock. An abandoned branch
of Northern Rock. A lot of people don't open themselves up to art
and this is why. Bored, I begin to VLOG.
There are, as I speak, 13 species of lemur extant
in this comment section alone. 12, 11, 9.
Ever wonder what happened to parkour
and all the brave young men who risked their lives
scaling the banks and offices of yore? Nor do I.
You can't hold back the tide with a broom.
And yet here you are, little thing. And yet here am I.
Here we both are together, the day
spread out before us like an influencer on a table.
An open window, a slight disturbance in the weather.

2.

Merkel's putative zoom fail; vegan vs keto.
What we need here is a dubstep intro, a frozen pizza.
Hey Keanu, do you think the man killed by log a meme
constitutes a new order of simulacra?
What about the log killed by a man meme?
Stop staring at me. I enjoyed your brief epochal cameo
in the rivers and waterways of Indochina
but, alas, this is farewell, Asiatic Softshell Turtle.
You have transcended the limits of your genre.
The most 90's thing I've ever seen? A future.
That adolescent dream that, like my adolescence,
persists, improbably. Like an anxiety disorder.
Like a rainbow or fake IPhone on Alibaba.
What we need here is a theory, some insulating foam.
Did I ever tell you about the time Bob Ross
appeared as my spirit guide on ayahuasca?

Come closer, my ephebe. Close the window.
Ignore for now the forest fire, the buffering icon.

3.

Going to Ikea on a Saturday: bad idea.
How many lives is that left now?
Obscenely rich but oil poor, I don't think
we're in Venezuela anymore, Todo.
But how do you feel about these shorts?
This giant rare earth mine—the paisleys of
the radioactive tailing ponds, miles long,
come in mineral aquamarines, ochres, taupes.
Pretty sure my Charizard just went into toxic shock.
I guess I'd hoped for more from my time here
that is, on earth. You know what this reminds me of?
The last trip I took to Burning Man: a thousand swans
burst from forehead of the Bezos avatar
as a projector showed looped footage of
Kim Jon-un and Trump coming into hug.
That was it. No fires, no trance, no drugs.
For a long time after I thought I was God.
Up until my crypto coin tanked, I probably was.

Magnolia (Five Entries from a Journal).

1.

Passing by today I had the sense of being watched. No, that isn't right.
Of being *seen*. No, still more. Of being *witnessed*. That was it. *By you*. And,
soon after feeling apprehended, I had the further sense of belonging to a cast,
a cast of other like individuals. The naked house guest, for instance,
say halfway through his host's wife's girdle; the cheating spouse; the burglar
and peeping Tom.

Guilt united us. That much was obvious. Guilt in some form. But what was it,
exactly,
about your sombre apparition that arrested us, each, all, so effectively? I
had to ask myself; or rather, that was the question you posed,
stood there in the early morning twilight, still largely nude in late December

wearing the fog like a negligee.

2.

One snapped twig. A fallen leaf. A puddle, shattered. Two startled koi.

Are we getting any closer?

That, alas, I found I couldn't answer.

So I consoled myself in the usual way. With the opera. With *Madama Butterfly*
I bade you almost totally farewell... that is until the last scene, in the last act.
I mean of course when Butterfly erupts so audaciously into that last, trilling aria;
I mean of course when I felt that familiar thrill— less at what I heard
than at what rose up inside me in response— what rises up in all of us in the presence of the diva.

I mean of course when I heard my own wild, implausible song. I drew the curtain.
I drank you, in a manner of speaking, in. But alas (again) for it was gone (my song).

Was it ever there, or just a rumour?

3.

Yesterday your first full flower. Today another... and another.

I wrote: 'A kind of wild, genital flamboyance'; I wrote: 'Not nakedness itself but its *performance*';
I wrote: 'No, performance *itself* laid bare'.

Well, as you'd imagine, that all went swiftly in the bin.

But that *colour*. I had to have it. It took me until 2.00 to place it.
Christmas 89, a boy of three (me) receives a gift, a gift in deference to an obsession—
the music of one who, in this dimension at least, between the years of 78-93
went by the name of Prince. I had heard *Love Sexy*. I had seen the videos on MTV.
But nothing could've prepared me for this. Unwrapping *Graffiti Bridge* that is,
and being faced with so unabashedly, so outrageously, yes, *those lips*.

4.

The gap between the lightning and the thunder.
Between the two front teeth of Bridgette B. Between poverty and plenty.

Needless to say I came down in my robe today to find you had exploded.
Utter plenitude. Utter potpourri meets Pussy Riot. Utter... everything.
And yet there was *something* missing. I'd like to say that you seemed poker-
faced
but that would be a nonsense. I'd like to say that, in your weird repose at least,
I found the riotous and the subdued to be bedfellows; I found silence at its
loudest;
I found the garish…

as I said, a nonsense— but as I watched your boldest petal begin to tremble,
then fall…

I had the sense that, how can I say it, somehow it was a knowing eyebrow
slightly raised.

5.

Then lowered. That was a month ago. I think it snowed.
And now? Do I see your first bare branches already peeping through?
Inevitable I suppose. Look at disco, monogamy.

I think I feel the way Pierre Magnol must have felt
the day he gave away his name to you at the altar of taxonomy.
Which is to say, I have no idea how I am feeling.

The sense of loss is quite astonishing; but how explain this buoyancy? Simply
I will sit here and watch your cream and purple petals
drift away— and they are drifting now at quite a rate.

Should I remember or forget you? Whatever. Whatever helps to get me
through,
to endure the yearly drought of you, that entirely regrettable duration

Aka 'the summer'.

Javant Biarujia

Translations & Pataphysical Interpretations of some *Petits Poèmes en Prose* by Charles Baudelaire

Double Room

(Translation of "*La Chambre Double*")

A room resembling a place of dreams, a truly *spiritual* room, where the stagnant atmosphere is lightly tinted in pink and blue. The soul takes a lazy bath here, aromatised by regret and desire. — It's rather crepuscular, bluish and pinkish; a voluptuous dream during an eclipse.

The furniture is stretched out, prostrate, languid, as if dreaming; vegetable and mineral, you could say, endowed with somnambulism. Its upholstery speaks a muted language, like flowers, like the heavens, like setting suns. There are no artistic abominations on the walls. Just like a pure dream, a definite art, a positive art which is unanalysed is blasphemy. Here, everything is sufficiently clear and harmoniously obscure in its delight. An admixture of the slightest scent of the most exquisite choice, and a very light humidity, swims about in this atmosphere, where the dormant spirit is hothouse soothed.

Muslin like snow cascades copiously down and billows before the windows and bed. The Idol is lying here, sovereign of dreams. But how did she get she here? Who has brought her? What magical power has installed her on this dreamy throne of desire? What does it matter? She's here and I recognise her!

Here are her *eyes* I recognise, subtly terrible and malicious, whose flame within has spanned the dusk. They draw you in, they subjugate you, they devour any impudent look in their direction. I've often studied them, these black stars that command both admiration and curiosity. To what benevolent demon do I thus owe for being surrounded by mystery, silence, peace and perfumes? Oh, beatitude! What we generally call life, even when it's expanded to its fullness, has nothing in common with this supreme life which I have come to know and which I savor minute by minute, second by second!

No, it's not minutes, it's not seconds! Time has disappeared — it's Eternity which reigns, an eternity of delight!

But a loud and terrible knock has come at the door, and like in really bad dreams it's as though I've been hit in the stomach with a pickaxe. And then a Ghost

appears. He's a bailiff come to torture me in the name of the law. Or, she's an infamous concubine come to pour out her heart, adding trivialities of her life, when I'm the one suffering. Or, indeed, an office boy for the owner of a magazine who's come for the follow-up of a manuscript.

The paradisiacal room and the Idol, queen of dreams, *La Sylphide*, as the great René called her, all this magic disappeared when the Ghost brutally knocked on the door. What horror! I remember now, I remember! Yes, this squalid room, this eternal stretch of boredom, is indeed mine. The stupid furniture all dusty and broken; the chimney with no fire in its grate, the fireplace dirty from its use as a spittoon; the sad windows where the rain has left streaks in the dust; the manuscripts, crossed out or incomplete; the desk diary with its deadly boring days marked out in pencil.

Alas, this other-worldly perfume, which had intoxicated me with its perfected sensibility, has been replaced with stale tobacco smell mixed in with who-knows-what other musty smells that just make you want to vomit. Now, it's just rancid grief you breathe in. Only one thing in this narrow, disgusting world knows how to make me smile: a vial of laudanum, full of endearment and treachery. An old and terrible friend, like all my friends, alas!

Ah, yes! Time has reappeared; Time reigns supreme now. And with this hideous old man has come his whole devilish retinue of Memories, Regrets, Illness, Fear, Anxiety, Nightmares, Angers and Nerves. I assure you that the seconds are now stretched out, solemnly and substantially, and each one says as it flies off the clock: "I am Life, unbearable, implacable Life!"

There's only one Moment in human life tasked with announcing good news, the kind of good news that causes you to have an inexplicable fear. Yes, Time reigns — he has taken back his cruel dictatorship. He is goading me with his double-pronged stick, as if I were a bovine. "Get off the stage, blockhead! Sweat the hard stuff, galley slave! Live, you damn bastard!"

Doppelgängsta Rap

(A Pataphysical interpretation of "*La Chambre Double*")

Assemble chamber music to how many revs per second, a veritable *Negro Spiritual*, where it's at, Daddyo, exquisite cadavers after *After Léger's Bar-man* or Stein's "rose is a rose". Lame Ypres: the bang-bang of the Great War, atomised by trenches and delirium. It's somethin' else, Bluey, Rosie, revvin' their Oldsmobile durin' the Blitz.

Oh, anachronism! Mobilised phantom of the Ol' Opry, stripped bare, tongue hangin' out. Mobilised in the air, like guessin' if it's vegetable or mineral. The toffs speak like Tupac, flowers of Machu Picchu, like acrobats in Cirque du Soleil.

There's nothin' cruddy on the walls. Spoken like a true rapper: a life unrecorded ain't worth nothin'. A positive result is a real blow to some. Here, too, an efficient claret can do the job. It's a question of harmonies. A path to nowhere with smelly cabbages on all sides, pan alley cat smells, drizzle, creatin' an atmosphere of The Show Must Go On.

Who cried at the top of his lungs on the balcony or in front of the bed? Neither Al Capone nor Posh Spice got the memo about how to behave durin' the interregnum or Between the Wars. Billy Idol, on the other hand, is rex of the revs. (Or, is that "interrex"? It don't matter, I'm no homewrecker!)

So, Miramax subtitled your fiery eyes and Mad Max was gunnin' in the connin'-tower. Hell's attire, hell's sub Decca, hell's devout rear-guard action laid waste temples of Twist and twirl! I've often studied the effects of fame on admirals and *Kommandants*.

Banish my Benesh — have you put "I Left My Heart in Ypres" through its paces? Oh, anachronism! Nomic circus clowns vyin' for memes, a most heuristic and minute-by-minute expansionism ain't nothin' compared to The Supremes! Nah, it's got nothin' to do with The Seekers! Rat-rhymes belong to rap; Tammany Hell Roolz, OK!

But then a terrible cooption lures Cole Porter into his own net, and as if in a hellish ensemble, he sounded posh as he recited whole passages of *Le Potomak*.

And then Phil Specter arrived. I clutched the pearls I bought off the shoppin' channel; a big turbine of a sound emanated from behind the blinds that made

Avida Dollars seem trivial in comparison; in a fit of rage, he threw a sautéed rissole in the direction of my manuscript.

The posters of Che Guevara, *La Sylphide* and Cheech and Chong disappeared under Specter's spell.

Spanish fly! Amadou! Rosé! Yes, this toady pacesetter with its white tyres belchin' out a xylophonic jazz from New Jersey to Verdun, traces of boredom correspondin' to incomplete or ruptured scripts, the kind Christian Marquand might have starred in.

And added to this, a flabby nude from the circus who was, however, the perfect guest tourin' in a limited way in 1910, stood on the Oldsmobile's runnin' boards and shouted that an Oldsmobile was no getaway car. On the contrary, its maintenance alone was what Kerouac meant by desolation angels.

Doncha know 'bout panic in Detroit? Laud the drug! Leave your heart in LA — Rodeo Drive, Beverly Hills, Duchamp's memory of bein' in the Boy Scouts, "The Prince of Bel Air" (or, Machiavelli's *Prince* — which is it?) and other treats.

Ah, yes, I'm pissin' in Time Square, I'm pissin' in Times Square and I'm happy again. Piano hideouts beat violin cases: Souvenirs, *American Graffiti*, Rhymes, the English, Django Reinhardt, the Jazz Age, Cars and Nickels in the jukebox.

Assyrian typewriters punch out *La Phalange nouvelle* while Leni Riefenstahl films it. Jackals, the Jackal jivin' the pendulum, said: "I'm no lifer, I'm not goin' to rot in no damn clink!"

An ill Siegried Sassoon (not to be confused with Vidal), who has been on an Egyptian mission not to *walk like one*, examines an inexplicable cicatrice on his right leg.

Okey-dokey! There's no such thing as a temporary killer. You've gotta take back the streets. Savonarola the bully (not Siegfried, never!) pushes me like some pushover:

"Hue and cry all you like, Boustrophedon! Sue the pants offa me! You're just a gangster wannabe!"

Each Has His Own Chimaera

(Translation of "*Chacun Sa Chimère*")

I met several men bent over as they walked beneath wide-open grey skies, in a wide dusty plain where there were no roads and no grass to be had, not even a thistle or a nettle. Each one was carrying an enormous chimaera on his back, as heavy as a sack of flour or coal, or a Roman infantryman's gear. But these monstrous beasts weren't just a dead weight. On the contrary, they enveloped the men and drained them of the power of their sinewy muscles; they dug their two giant claws into the men's chests, and their fabulous heads overhung the men's foreheads like those terrible helmets ancient warriors wore, hoping to put shock and awe into their enemy.

I questioned one of the men, asking him where they were going. He told me he didn't know, nor did the others. But it was evident they were going somewhere, for it was as though they were impelled by an irresistible urge to put one foot in front of the other.

On a curious note: None of the travellers seemed bothered by the ferocious beast on his back collaring him. You could say they thought of them as an indispensable part of themselves. None of their tired, solemn faces betrayed any despair whatsoever. They walked under the splenetic cupola of the sky, their feet buried in the soil, dusty and as desolate as the sky above, their faces resigned like those condemned to an eternal hope.

They passed me and disappeared over the horizon, at the point of the earth's curve.

I persisted for a few moments in trying to understand this mystery, but soon enough an irresistible feeling of Indifference came over me, weighing down on me more heavily than their back-breaking Chimaeras.

The Jackal Shimmy Shake

(A Pataphysical interpretation of "*Chacun Sa Chimère*")

Susan Sarandon riding the plains near Grand Rapids, reading Gore Vidal's *Duluth*, a one-joke novel near a one-horse town, dreaming of the Shard on the right bank of the Thames, in London, England. Susan Sarandon without an out. That's right. It might have been raining men Gustave Courbet painted. Scots Greys and other men in uniform. The Jackal was wearing a tabard, an enormous chimer. Oh, Lourdes was ransacked by crusaders who, like René Char, were engaged in writing a fantasy novel.

Mailer alert! The monstrance beats the peace pipe any day! *Au contraire, mon ami*, it inveigles an invious lobster-pot and putrid molluscs. Nerval ringing my bells vanquished griffons on those fabulous mountains, teetering a temenos sacred to communist ormers, parlaying *Les Liaisons dangereuses* in Esperanto; an adjutant (*Major Barbara*) under the gruelling sun.

I sequestered one of these lobsters, as oleaginous as alley cats. Savage conchs swept upon me upon the rocks, where I knelt before Louis Quinze, who caved in on my demands for an Italian Mechanical Womb.

The curate's shoelaces, not eggs, were knotted: banquets of tofu, lobster and other lyrical foods. The suspense was killing me! The honor killer in "Consider Your Verdict" was like one of Louis's shooters from his pheasant parties. All these Fatimid viziers seemed cooped up; it was as though they were singing "Don't Tie Me Down, Sport", a kind of despair or parlor game, where *Libido Means Lust* if not business. Susan Sarandon, if not Billy Idol, yelling the rebel yell, plunging a knife into the merry widow's soul as Donovan's "Mellow Yellow" played in the background. It jiminy cricketed the physics off signed copies of a salt-damaged ayurvedic text (a turquoise *Othello*).

The heart parsed Lawrence of Arabia's house, a demijohn of red wine atmospheric of Plastic Bertrand's version of "Like a Virgin".

Pound calqued The Odyssey in corridors of mystery (*Marat/Sade*); a quorum of these madhouse travellers led an Iranian production of Cocteau's *Belle et la Bête* and produced Indie movies and a Black Sabbath documentary. The Jackal yelled "Lordy, Lordy!" as Lafargue's taxi's wheels came off.

The Fool and the Statue of Venus

(Translation of "*Le Fou et la Vénus*")

What a glorious day! The vast park swoons under the burning eye of the sun, like youth under the domination of Love.

A silent and universal ecstasy of things; it's as if the waters themselves are asleep. Unlike human occasions, there's an orgy of silence here.

You could say an ever-increasing light is shining on everything; excited flowers are burning with desire, rivalling the azure of the sky in the ardor of its colors. The heat makes their perfume visible, sending their fumes up toward the heavens like smoke.

However, I noticed someone who seemed cursed somehow amid this universal splendor.

At the foot of a colossal Venus there was a court jester, one of those fools forced to make kings laugh when Remorse or Boredom takes hold of them, got up in an impossibly gaudy outfit, his hair twisted to look like horns or jester's bells. He was all huddled up against the base of the statue, lifting his teary eyes up to the immortal Goddess.

And those eyes said: "I'm the last and loneliest of men, deprived of love and friendship, lower and more imperfect than any animal. However, even I am made to understand and feel how immortal Beauty is! Ah, Goddess, take pity on me for my sickness and sadness!

But Venus simply stared into the unfathomable distance with her implacable, marble eyes.

The Foo Fighters of Venice

(A Pataphysical interpretation of "*Le Fou et la Vénus*")

He's a kind of admiral! Waste lands of spermatozoa brew Leonine ch-ch-changes in America.

The former stars of Universal Pictures say to their chauffeurs: No sex in prime time! Biedermeier furniture in the execs' offices. "Ma'am, don't touch the intercom!" Be they young and restless by day or fit by night, they all say Trinity College launched them into orgies.

Ondine's cuneiform luminescence fades in extreme perfection. "Hey, come dance with me!" Curling staves existed to Dodonaean rivers, swooning Riviera types by the pool, a bundle of nerves, and hustlers proffering Visa cards for chandeliers or gold-tipped cigarettes. The Penguin edition says so!

Despondent, they dance in the university corridors, they speak in nasute affricates. They are the jetset.

"Oh, did you buy *Colossus of Maroussi* in a Penguin edition? I found a copy in one of those artificial foundations, one of those institutions where Rumor or Loot upsets the Establishment apple-cart, drunk on a strepitoso rendition of Bing Crosby and David Bowie's "White Christmas", too reminiscent of Count d'Orgel, I have to say, where desire's plainchants are pitted versus the eternal Dice."

And Thurston Howell III says: " 'I've got Georgia on my mind'." He's a kind of admiral, previewing the island's demagogues and raising an effete finger against the slaughter of pigs. Heideggerian fame awaits poor principia. Ah, immortal Botox! Ah, throw of the Dice! Ah, Spin the Wheel!

But Oprah Winfrey tosses her Venetian cape with cool indifference. "Keep an eye on the canal, for Jenny's sake! All the while singing "Yes, Jesus Loves Me".

The Dog and the Perfume Bottle

(Translation of "*Le Chien et le Flacon*")

"Here, boy! Good dog! Here, doggie-doggie! Come and smell an excellent perfume I bought from the best perfumer in the city."

And the dog, wagging its tail, which is, I believe, when it comes to such poor creatures, the sign for smiling or laughing, approaches and nudges its moist nose against the opened bottle. Then, suddenly recoiling in fright, it barks at me as if in reproach.

"Stupid dog! If I'd've offered you a bag of dog turds, you'd've smelled it with delight and possibly even eaten one. So, miserable friend in this miserable life of mine, you're no different from the general public, in that you never present them with delicate perfumes, for they get agitated. Instead, any old rubbish chosen will do, so long as it's exquisitely chosen."

"China Girl" by Falco

(A Pataphysical interpretation of "*Le Chien et le Flacon*")

"Bon Jovi, "China Girl" (the Iggy Pop version), Cher, all names that will have to be asterisked for future generations, come and resplend in an excellent rendition of 'Ashes to Ashes' paranymous with 'Rock Me Amadeus'."

And call me the Queen of Sheba as I fret in the queue for tickets that everything will be sold out. Semiotics will have to do. Sapperment, Sonny! It's Falco posing curiously by the debauched wreck, bellowing to the effray: "You lot can stay!". He then, as if reproached, sings "*Der Kommissar*".

"Ah! *Les Misérables* is playing against that shitty film *My Dinner with André*. Flaired trousers and other atrocities from Tommy in the whiskey (or die), a key poll of the pajamaed fops in the public path (*Swann's Way*). Father, give me the keys to the Lexus. May deaf ears not hear the swan song 'Swanee River' (Taliban)."

The Bad Glazier

(Translation of "*Le Mauvais Vitrier*")

There are those with purely contemplative natures and personalities that are entirely unfit for the job in hand, which however, due to some mysterious and unknown impulse, act with a rashness they thought themselves incapable of.

Those who, fearing they'd find something else to fear in the manager of their apartment building, wander about an hour beforehand until daring to enter, those who keep a letter a fortnight before opening it, or delay by six months steps that have needed to be taken for a year, sometimes feel thrown into an action as if by an irresistible force, like an arrow shot from its bow. Moralists and doctors, who claim to know everything, can't explain how this sudden, crazy burst of energy comes to such indolent and comfort-loving souls, and how, incapable of accomplishing the simplest and most necessary of tasks, find in a single moment the courage to carry out the most absurd and even the most dangerous of acts.

One of my friends, the most harmless dreamer who would never hurt a fly, set a forest alight to see, he said, if the fire caught on so easily as they say. The experiment disappointed him ten times; on the eleventh, it was quite a different story, exceeding all expectations.

Another lit a cigar next to a barrel of gunpowder *in order to see — to find out — what would happen, to tempt fate*. Holding back from having to prove oneself, taking a gamble, knowing what it feels like to be anxious for no earthly reason — as a lark, for want of something better to do.

Still another, timid to the point that he lowers his eyes even before other men, where he has to summon every bit of courage to enter a café or pass by a theatre box-office, where it seems to him the ticket-sellers are invested with the majesty of Minos, Eachus and Rhadamanthus, will suddenly latch on to an old man passing him on the street and squeeze him tightly in a hug as an astonished crowd looks on.

Why? Because … because this old man was so irresistible? Perhaps. But it is more likely that he himself doesn't know.

This is a kind of energy that sparks with boredom and dreaminess, and those who suddenly possess it are generally, like I said, dreamers and the most indolent of beings.

I have been victim more than once to these whims and crises myself, leading me to believe that Devils intent on doing us harm, enter us and make us perform, without our knowing it, their most absurd doings.

One morning, I got up feeling glum, sad, listless, but pushed, it seemed to me, to do something grand, to make a fuss of some sort; and I opened the window, no less! (Observe, please, that this force which, for some people, is not the result of a piece of work or a combination thereof, but of a fortuitous inspiration — hysterical, according to doctors; satanic, according to those who think a little better than doctors — takes part in pushing us passively toward loads of dangerous or improper actions.) The first person I saw in the street was a glazier whose call was piercing and discordant. He approached in the heavy and dirty Paris air. It would be impossible moreover for me to say why I was seized in regard to this poor man by a hatred as sudden as it was as all-consuming.

"Hey, hey!" I called, beckoning him to come up. I thought, however, not without some mirth, that, with my room being on the sixth floor and the stairs being very narrow, the man would have to expend quite a bit of effort getting up while holding on to his precious cargo.

Finally, he appeared. I examined with curiosity his glass and said:

"What? No colored glass? Pink, red, blue, magical glass, heavenly glass? How rude of you, roaming about in the streets of this poor area, and you don't even have anything to resemble rose-colored glasses!" I pushed him toward the stairwell in a vigorous fashion, where, groaning, he tripped and fell.

I approached the balcony and grabbed hold of a little flowerpot, and when the man reappeared at the front doorway, I dropped my weapon on to the back edge of the hooks holding his glass together, making him turn around in shock. It managed to break the whole of the walking poverty on his back in a sound resembling a crystal palace shattered by thunder and lightning. And, drunk on my madness, I called out furiously:

"Rose-colored glasses, rose-colored glasses!"

These disturbing practical jokes are not without danger, for which one can pay dearly. But what of eternal damnation when one has found an infinity of pleasure in an instant?

The Uterine Victorola

(A Pataphysical interpretation of "Le Mauvais Vitrier")

Ilya Kabakov, who contemplative of Santa Fé's Kurt Cobain, despondent, sues a mysterious and air-conditioned ampoule, assisting cocaine foreigners with a rapper who's laced serrated Incas with energy drinks.

Telcos, craning to Trubenise a sashaying concinnity, wore long lashes to garner support without the re-entry of the Space Shuttle, telcos garnishing quince jelly on lettuce sounds like day-traders, buying Oprah's doona on raisins in a car-boot sale a day's march from here, seesawing telco forests sprucing up the Cayman Islands with ittybitty verse lacking stream of deforestation, like the flesh on an arrow. As the removalist and the maid said, key witnesses to a murder in the Savoy Hotel (no perving on exes, please), they do fancy over-phallic seafood, ergo assaying alms by their asses and wolves, and how the Incas blew dark stars, laying shrews, laying a naysay pluteus. *Elle* tunes for a narrow tarn — Luke's zucchini acts of God in an Anna Wintour (= Winter Year) essoin.

The Emmys' demy octavo, The Pet Shop Boys takes offence if ravers have put all their quinoa eggs in one basket, misery bro: "The foyer of a forest equipped," he quipped, with a few prenuptial sways. Oh, aunty, facilitate general conquistador conscience! Deep and sweet, his ex hunkered down, but after the fashion of ounces, and Elmer Fudd broke trophy beans.

An ulterior alumina, a seagull check of your pueblo waters, *to provide, to savor, to stay in the tent*, to sample the oil crisis even after being proud neritic, to play the field, the jockey, to Con Air the play seers of sprites, to laugh, to stream Capri live into your room; you deserve better.

Stay tuned to a species of iniquity: the Keystone Cops of Long Bay jailbait and of the bravery. Answer Led Zeppelin's manifesto in a minor key in an operatic saltimbanco, the general comity of nations, India rubber and Russian beech.

An altar, a timbered cuttlefish keeps the bass player yearning for memes from the divine liar guarding Pink Floyd's members, aspiring to rustle a keen Yoko Ono leaf-mould, to identifying sarafans, to volunteering on behalf of a Cape Malay or a theatrical donkey, with Ondine controlling their umbrellas infested with the maggots of media magnates, deacons and adamant Adams; *Soldier Blue*'s greatest hits weighed down by lard, keypadding the ambassador for the Riviera with pantomime miasms: how divine to find a fully equipped ebony cabinet!

Why? you ask. Why, indeed! Was his barstool wisdom so unrecognisably sandpaperish? Don't forget saltpetre; but it's vegetal plumes to Siouxsie and the Banshees who praise Nancy Sinatra.

J.Lo was in a once-a-week team of cherry Coke in these lands; key bumper-to-bumper days as the music died to save Greece ("Grease is the word!"). Who knew anew compromising fonts, Notre-Dame de Paris in flames, absurd volplanetor?

"Gain me tins, mayday me shins, me lov'ly, Tristan and Isolde!" Marvin Gaye cries or gay viziers cry (echoes of Prince), and the Penguin Café Affair pales in significance compared to Michael Jackson; alas, you have freed the offender!

(Oops, once the footprints are surveyed, the spree of misty-eyed fiction, which, say, camarons from Cameroon, are not the last rays of a sheer veil (see below) or a Combine Harvester, mdm rations for trout. The boomtown rats have left the ship toot-sweet, neither football nor podology for Mel Tormé in Medici salons: "Satiny salons, Sir," said quiffs and pansies in Chinook ambling amid the myrrh.)

The première of *Persona* in white tie and black jacket was vitriolic, laced with Euonymus and Persian powder, mint julep mouth on a transverse flute, lords and ladies beyond Moe Senior's (The Three Stooges) drapes. He'll miss your FOO WAS HERE, a legal spadroon of a senior Australian spied in Home Depot in the Sudan.

"Hey, you!" went Pink Floyd in despondent, raffish, displays, not without a certain gay flavor, champagne in sixteenmo and escargots for you, lobster devolved applications of a crocheted, right-handed angel of the morn (French horn).

In a van, Ajax perused *I Am Curious* — Blue *and* Yellow; oysters before bed. "Is that all there is? No persons of color? No funky tattoos, Redskins, Bluestockings; no magicians, no parade in Oxford Street? José Feliciano on the promenade, Peggy Lee in a face-off with Edith Piaf?" And he postulated quia timet via snail-mail verse, where they thrashed a groyne.

He mapped the rocks of the malcontented seas, a small town (Peoria or Podunk?), and when Herbert Lom appeared in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, set in the Port of Melbourne, tomb-robber perps, my angina hardly on the rebound, anonymous posteriors pushing up daisies, and drawing the burning bush on Arches paper, a breeze on the back of ambulance chasers, a Claude Lorrain glass, prawns by the foundry.

And Rimbaud was eager to fold, crying out, " 'La Vie en Rose'!"

You say you play the bugle nervously — and not without some Persil to mop the spit up with. May you camp it up with ortolans (discard the veil!): After all, who hasn't fancied a bit of *jouissance*?